

THE MYSTICAL PHILOSOPHY
of
MUḤYID DÍN-IBNUL ‘ARABÍ

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THE MYSTICAL PHILOSOPHY
of
MUḤYID DÍN-IBNUL 'ARABÍ

By

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To

REYNOLD A. NICHOLSON

in grateful appreciation of his
kindness and admiration for
his learning

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
----------------	----------------

<i>Introduction</i>	xv
---------------------	----

A short biography of Ibnul 'Arabī and general remarks about his books and style.

<i>Abbreviations</i>	xxi
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Chapter I. ONTOLOGY

IBNUL 'ARABĪ'S METAPHYSICAL THEORY OF REALITY

§ I: (a) Meaning of Being, p. 1. (b) Can Existence be separated in Thought or in the External World from the "*mābriyyāt*" (quiddities) of Things?, 5. (c) Being and Existence. Not-Being and Not-Existent, 7. (d) The Species of Being, 8. (e) Necessity: Contingency and Impossibility, 9.

§ II (i): (a) The One and the Many: "*Ḥaqq* and *Khalq*", 10. (b) Ibnul 'Arabī's Absolute Monism and Ḥallāj's Dualism, 13. (c) The way Ibnul 'Arabī expresses the Relation between the One and the Many: the Real and the Phenomenal, 15.

§ II (ii): Transcendence and Immanence, 18.

§ II (iii): (a) Causality and its Place in Ibnul 'Arabī's System, 24. (b) The Cause of the World as a Whole, 27. (c) The Causality of the Divine Names, 33.

§ III (i): (a) Essence—Attributes and Names, 34. (b) Reality in Relation to our Knowledge, 36. (c) How Ibnul 'Arabī explains away the Ethical and Personal Names and Attributes of God, 41. (d) The Two Aspects of the Divine Names, 46.

§ III (ii): (a) The Fixed Prototypes or the Latent Realities (*al-'yān al-thābita*), 47. (b) The Place of the "*al-'yān al-thābita*" in Ibnul 'Arabī's System, 52.

§ IV: (a) Ibnul 'Arabī's Pantheistic Doctrine, 54. (b) Allah of Islam and the Pantheistic One, 55. (c) The Notion of a Deity in Ibnul 'Arabī's Doctrine, 58. (d) Ibnul 'Arabī's Doctrine of Pantheism and Neoplatonism, 59. (e) The System of Revelations or Manifestations (*tajalliyāt*) on Ibnul 'Arabī's View takes the Place of Plotinus' Emanations, 62.

Chapter II. IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S DOCTRINE OF THE LOGOS

§ A: (a) The Ontological Aspect of Ibnul 'Arabí's Logos, i.e. the Logos as the Reality of Realities: the Logos as the Creative, Animating and Rational Principle of the Cosmos, 68. (b) The Mystical Aspect of the Logos, 70. (c) The Relation between the Reality of Mohammed—the "*Qutb*"—and other Prophets and Saints, 72. (d) The Relation of Ibnul 'Arabí's Theory of the "*Qutb*" (or the Reality of Mohammed) to his General Metaphysical Doctrine, 75. (e) The Third Aspect of the Logos: the Logos as the Perfect Man, 77. (f) The Perfect Man as the Microcosm, 82. (g) The Perfect Man as the Cause of the Universe, 82. (h) The Source of Ibnul 'Arabí's Doctrine of the Logos and General Remarks, 85.

§ B: (a) Ibnul 'Arabí's View on Prophecy, Apostleship and Saintship—the Question of the Seal of the Saints, 92. (b) The Meaning of a Saint, 93. (c) Saintship and "General Vicegerency" (*al khilāfah al 'āmmah*), 95. (d) The Rights Ibnul 'Arabí claims for Muslim Saints, 96. (e) The Seal of the Saints (*khātamu'l awḥyā'*), 98.

Chapter III. EPISTEMOLOGY—PSYCHOLOGY AND MYSTICISM OF IBNUL 'ARABÍ

§ I. EPISTEMOLOGY: (a) The Different Kinds of Propositions (or Judgments), 103. (b) Intuitive or Esoteric Knowledge, 105. (c) Characteristics of Intuitive or Esoteric Knowledge, 106. (d) Ibnul 'Arabí's Mystical Knowledge, 109.

§ II. PSYCHOLOGY:

A. MYSTICAL AND METAPHYSICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S THEORY OF THE SOUL: (a) The Relation between Particular Intelligences and Universal Reason, 116. (b) The Changeability of the Heart of the Mystic, 119. (c) Ibnul 'Arabí's Theory of the Nature of the Soul, 120. (d) The Relation between the Three Souls, 121.

B. EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY: (a) Perception, 125. (b) Conceptual Knowledge (*Al 'ilm al taṣawwuri*), 126. (c) What Ibnul 'Arabí means by Desire (*shahwah*) and Will (*irādah*), 128. (d) The Meaning and Place of Imagination (*khayāl*) in Ibnul 'Arabí's Psychology and his Theory of Dreams, 129.

(e) Ibnul 'Arabî's Theory of Dîcams, 131. (f) The Creative Power of the Mystic, 133.

§ III. MYSTICISM AND THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: (a) Goal of Mysticism according to Older Şûfis, 137. (b) The Meanings of "*fana'*", 141. (c) "*Fana'*" as a Gradual Process, 143.

Chapter IV. IBNUL 'ARABÎ'S RELIGION—ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

§ I. IBNUL 'ARABÎ'S UNIVERSAL RELIGION. (a) The Ways of forming Beliefs about God, 149. (b) The Predetermination of Beliefs, 152.

§ II. IBNUL 'ARABÎ'S ETHICS AND THEODICY: (a) Determination and Free Will, 153. (b) The Problem of Good and Evil, 156. (c) The Relativity of Good and Evil, 157. (d) The Relation of Good and Evil to the Divine Law and the Place of the Divine Will in Ibnul 'Arabî's Theory, 159. (e) The Meaning of the Divine Will, 160.

§ III. THE QUESTION OF PUNISHMENT AND REWARD: IBNUL 'ARABÎ'S CONCEPTION OF HEAVEN AND HELL AND HIS ESCHATOLOGY, 163

§ IV. IBNUL 'ARABÎ'S AESTHETICS: (a) His View on Love and its Place in his System, 170. (b) The Three Kinds of Love, 171. (c) Beauty is the Basis of Love, 173.

Appendix

THE SOURCES OF IBNUL 'ARABÎ'S SYSTEM: (a) Ibnul 'Arabî and Ibn Masarra, 178. (b) The Sources which influenced Ibnul 'Arabî's Thought, 183. (c) The "*Epistles*" of Ikhwānuş-Şafâ, the Works of al Fârâbî and the Muslim Neoplatonists, 184. (d) Points of Correspondence between Ibnul 'Arabî and Ikhwānuş-Şafâ, 185. On Ontology, 186. On Psychology and Epistemology, 187. On the Microcosm and the Macrocosm, 188. (e) Hallāj's Influence on Ibnul 'Arabî, 188. (f) The Influence of the Scholastic Theologians on Ibnul 'Arabî, 191. (g) The Qur'ānic and the Traditional Element in Ibnul 'Arabî's System, 191.

Bibliography 195

Index 203

PREFACE

In the following pages an attempt has been made to give a summary of the Mystical Philosophy of Shaykh Muḥyid-Dīn Ibnul 'Arabī. It may be remarked that mystics have no philosophical systems or fixed doctrines; that Mysticism is essentially an eclectic subject. This, I should say, is generally true, but Ibnul 'Arabī is an exception to the rule. He has a definite philosophical doctrine of pantheism, the bearing of which is shown in every part of his system. There is also a formal dialectic which dominates the whole of his thought. So, in substance as well as form, Ibnul 'Arabī has the qualifications of the typical mystic *philosopher*. Nowhere in his numerous works can one find his mystical philosophy expressed *as a whole* or with any appreciable degree of coherence or order. The *Fuṣūṣu'l Ḥikam*, perhaps, may be said to sum up the maturest form of his pantheistic doctrine; but what an unintelligible and disorderly summary! One has to do so much hunting through other books by Ibnul 'Arabī besides the *Fuṣūṣ*, so much analysing and synthesising and gathering relevant points scattered haphazardly amongst masses of trivial or irrelevant details, before one can arrive at anything like a system. He was certainly conscious of a complete pantheistic philosophy but, lacking philosophical training, he did not know how to express it. He also may be said to be a consistent thinker, provided we do not attach too much importance to his *verbal* paradoxes and the way he often tries to reconcile Islamic dogmas with philosophical principles. There is no possible means of reconciling his philosophy with Islam. The orthodox garb with which he so persistently drapes his pantheistic ideas is a sham appearance purposely put there.

The importance of the subject and its value, not only in relation to the development of Islamic Mysticism alone, but

in relation to the general history of thought in the Middle Ages, can hardly be overrated. "No mystic of Islam", Prof. E. G. Browne says, "with the possible exception of Jalālud-Dīn Rūmī has surpassed Shaykh Muḥyid-Dīn in influence, fecundity or abstruseness, yet, so far as I am aware, no adequate study of his works and doctrines has yet been made in Europe (or in the East), though few fields of greater promise offer themselves to the aspiring Arabist who is interested in this characteristic aspect of Eastern thought."¹ It is no exaggeration to say that the teaching and example of Ibnul 'Arabī have been a great source of inspiration to practically every pantheistic Ṣūfī that came after him, whether in Arabic-speaking countries or in Persia. Even the great Jalālud-Dīn Rūmī is supposed to have had his share of this influence through attending the lectures of Ṣadrud-Dīn of Qūniyah on Ibnul 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ*. 'Irāqī (d. 686/1287), Jāmī (d. 898/1492), Jīlī (d. 811/1408), Shabistarī (d. 720/1320), his great commentator and follower Qāshānī (d. 730/1329) and many others are among the Ṣūfīs whose doctrines, terminology and mode of thought bear evident marks of the influence they received from his books or books of his disciples. Outside the Islamic world Ibnul 'Arabī's influence reached Christian philosophers and mystics of the Middle Ages. The works of Lully and Dante show traces of such influence, as Monsieur Palacios maintains.²

This work is divided into four chapters dealing with the whole of Ibnul 'Arabī's mystical philosophy, i.e. his ontology, doctrine of the Logos, epistemology, psychology, mysticism, religion, ethics, eschatology and aesthetics, and an appendix in which a rough outline is given of the main sources which seem to me to have influenced Ibnul 'Arabī's thought. The question of the sources of his philosophy alone could form the subject of an independent treatise of the most vital importance to the history of Islamic Mysticism. The

¹ *Lst. Hist. of Persia*, II, p. 500.

² See Palacios' *Islam and the Divine Comedy* and *Abenmasarra*.

material on which the work is based is drawn from twenty-three works by Ibnul 'Arabí, principally his *Futûḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ*. Many important quotations had to be omitted owing to their length, and references had to be made to them instead. As for the subject of the book, I may add that, so far as I know, no synthetic and comprehensive account of the whole of Ibnul 'Arabí's mystical philosophy has yet been offered by any student of Oriental Mysticism. All that has been done on the subject is to be found in:

(1) Palacios' account of Ibnul 'Arabí's psychology¹ which consists of a large number of translated passages from the *Futûḥāt* and Ibnul 'Arabí's *Risālah fi Ma'nā an-Nafs war-Rûḥ*. Also in some incidental references he makes to Ibnul 'Arabí in his *Abenmasarra*. Palacios seems to have deliberately ignored Ibnul 'Arabí's *Fuṣūṣ*, which, I believe, is an indispensable work for anyone who wishes to write on its author.

(2) Prof. R. A. Nicholson's "Notes on the *Fuṣūṣ*" in his *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*.²

(3) Nyberg's introduction to his *Kleinere Schriften des Ibnul 'Arabí* in which he discusses some points of Ibnul 'Arabí's metaphysics in connection with the three minor works of Ibnul 'Arabí which he has edited.

(4) Other incidental remarks and notes which we find in such books as Prof. Browne's *Literary History of Persia*, Andrae's *Die Person Mohammeds*, Massignon's works on Hallāj.

Palacios' *Abenmasarra* particularly was of some help to me in connection with the question of the source of Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine. It gave me the clue to some references regarding Ibn Masarra, his disciples and relation to Ibnul 'Arabí, which I worked out independently and arrived at a conclusion which is opposite to the theory held by Palacios on the subject.

¹ *Acts of the 14th Oriental Congress*. Algiers, 1905.

² *Studies*, pp. 149-61.

In the East, on the other hand, various authors have discussed Ibnul 'Arabí and written treatises on him. But what concerned them most was the question of his orthodoxy; not so much his mysticism or philosophy as such, as how far such philosophy agrees or disagrees with Islamic dogmas. Controversies on this subject occupied the minds of the Muslims for centuries, and books were written by such men as Ibn Taymiyya, Jalálud-Dín as-Suyûtí, Fayrûzâbâdí, Makhzûmí, Taftâzâní, etc., etc., to defend Ibnul 'Arabí's orthodoxy or prove his infidelity (*kufr*). There has never been such a diversity of opinion on the orthodoxy of a man before. He has been regarded by some people as one of the greatest saints of Islam, and by others as a heretic of the worst type.

The subject is by no means exhaustively treated here. If by writing on it, therefore, I have succeeded in giving the bare outline of a picture of Ibnul 'Arabí's mind which might serve as a clue to the understanding of the whole or any part of his mystical philosophy and the philosophy of his followers, I should be perfectly satisfied.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge my deepest gratitude to my former colleague and teacher Prof. R. A. Nicholson, to whose constant guidance and unfailing sympathy this work owes more than I can express.

I have also to acknowledge my great obligations to the Cambridge University Press for their kindness and the patient attention they have given to this book; and to the Trustees of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial for the subsidy they have kindly granted towards its publication.

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INTRODUCTION

Shaykh Muhyid-Dīn Muhammad Ibn 'Alī, commonly known as Ibnul 'Arabī (or Ibn 'Arabī, particularly in the East) and Ash-Shaykhul Akbar¹ (Doctor Maximus) was born at Murcia (south-east of Spain) in A.H. 560 (A.D. 1164) during the reign of Sultan Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. Mardanīsh, the governor of East Andalusia,² and two years after the death of 'Abdul Mu'min, the Muwāḥḥid leader of North Africa. Judging by his "*nisba*" (i.e. al Ḥātimī at-Tā'ī) he seems to have been a descendant of the ancient Arabian tribe Tayy to which the great philanthrope Ḥātim belonged. Ibnul 'Arabī came from a well known and a pious family. His own father and two of his uncles were Ṣūfīs of some renown.

At the age of eight, i.e. in 568/1172, Ibnul 'Arabī left his native town and went to Lisbon. There he received his early Muslim education, which consisted of reading the Qur'ān and learning the rudiments of Islamic Law, from Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Khalaf. He soon moved to Seville, which at the time was a great centre of Spanish Ṣūfīs, and remained there for thirty years, during which he studied Islamic Law, Tradition and Theology. It was also at Seville that he met most of his early spiritual masters in the Ṣūfī Path³. While making Seville his permanent place of residence, Ibnul 'Arabī travelled a great deal in Spain and al Maghrib. He visited Cordova, where he made his first acquaintance, while still a lad, with Ibn Rushd, who was then the judge of the city.⁴ He also visited Tunis in 590/1194, Fez and Morocco. At the age of thirty-eight, i.e. in 598/1201, Ibnul 'Arabī set out for the East, partly to make his pilgrimage as was the custom of most pious men of the West, but chiefly, I believe, because Spain and the whole of the West at that time was the centre of great political disturbances. Besides, Ṣūfīs of Ibnul 'Arabī's type were re-

¹ Was also known in Spain as Ibn Surāqah.

² See *Fut.* iv, p. 264, l. 15, where Ibnul 'Arabī calls him Sa'd: cf. Ibnul Athīr, xi, p. 235.

³ See Appendix.

⁴ *Fut.* i, p. 199.

garded with disfavour by the Western theologians and the monarchs of Spain and North Africa. Had he remained in Spain, Ibnul 'Arabí might have shared the fate of Ibn Qasí (the head of the Sect of the Murídín) who was killed in 546, or that of Ibn Barraĵān and Ibnul 'Aríf, who are said to have been poisoned by the Governor of North Africa, 'Alí b. Yūsuf, after having been kept in prison for many years.

In 598/1201 Ibnul 'Arabí was in Egypt with his pupil and servant 'Abdullah al Ḥabashí. He lived there for a time, during which many attempts were made by Egyptians to assassinate him. He escaped death through the help and protection of an influential Shaykh who was a resident in Egypt at the time. Having left Egypt, he travelled very widely in the East, visiting Jerusalem, Mecca, where he taught for a time, other parts of the Ḥijāz, Bagdad, which he visited twice in A.H. 601 and A.H. 608, Aleppo and Asia Minor. Wherever he went he was received with great honour and given handsome endowments, which he always gave to the poor.¹ Finally, he settled at Damascus until he died in A.H. 638 (A.D. 1240) and was buried at the foot of Mount Qāsiyūn in the private sepulchre of Qāḍí Muḥyid-Dín b. az-Zakí.²

Ibnul 'Arabí had two sons, Sa'dud-Dín, who was a poet of a fairly high standard, and 'Imādud-Dín. The former died in A.H. 656, the latter in 667, and they were both buried next to their father.³

¹ *Fawāt al Wafayāt*, by Kutubí, II, p. 301.

² *Ibid.* p. 301.

³ See *Mir'āt az-Zamān*, by Ibnu-l Jawzī, p. 487. For further biographical details see:

(a) "Extracts from Shadharātudh-Dhahab by Abu'l Falāh 'Abdu-l Ḥayy", publ. by Prof. R. A. Nicholson, *J.R.A.S.* Oct. 1906.

(b) *Nafḥat-Tīb*, by Maqqarí, I, pp. 414-16.

(c) *Yawāqit*, by Sha'rānī, I, pp. 7-18.

(d) *Tabaqāt as-Sūfiyyah*, by Sha'rānī.

(e) *Tadhkirat al Awliyā*, by 'Aṭṭār.

(f) *Fawāt al Wafayāt*, by Kutubí, II, pp. 301 foll.

(g) *Nafḥat al Uns*, by Jāmí, pp. 633-45.

(h) Extracts from *Risālatu'l Quds*, publ. by Palacios.

IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S WORKS AND STYLE

Ibnul 'Arabí is adequately described by Brockelmann¹ as a writer of colossal fecundity. Brockelmann enumerates about 150 of Ibnul 'Arabí's extant works. From the catalogue of the Royal Egyptian Library in Cairo alone, it appears that there are about ninety of his extant works, mostly MSS. Ibnul 'Arabí himself is believed to have mentioned 289 of his writings in a memorandum which he drew up in 632/1234.² Jāmi says that he wrote more than 500 books, including his famous *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt*,³ and Sha'rānī reduces Jāmi's estimate by exactly a hundred.⁴

Apparently there seems to be no certainty about the exact number of his works or even the size of many of them. His *Commentary on the Qur'ān* has been described by some authors as consisting of ninety-five volumes,⁵ and by others as being only one or two. The *Futūḥāt* with which we are acquainted is in four volumes and the *Muḥāḍarātu'l Abrār* in one volume. Ibn Shākir al Kutubí tells us that the *Futūḥāt* is twenty volumes and the *Muḥāḍarāt* is five.⁶ Jāmi's estimate and Sha'rānī's (particularly about the *Commentary*) seem to be greatly exaggerated; as for the size of the *Futūḥāt* and the *Muḥāḍarāt*, the same works must have been divided into twenty and five volumes respectively, instead of four and one.

With the exception of a few works like *Mawāqit-un-Nujūm* and *At-Tadbirātu'l Ilāhiyyah*, most of Ibnul 'Arabí's books were written in the East, especially at Mecca and Damascus. His greatest and maturest works were written during the last fifteen to twenty years of his life. His earlier works were more of the nature of monographs dealing with special subjects, e.g. the Microcosm on which Ibnul 'Arabí wrote

¹ I, p. 441.

³ *Nafahāt*, p. 634.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 10.

² *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, by Prof. Browne, II, p. 497.

⁴ *Yawāqit* of Sha'rānī, p. 10.

⁶ *Fawāt al Wafayāt*, by Kutubí, pp. 301-2.

the *Tadbīrāt*, the disciplinary rules of the mystic Path, rules of *samāʿ* (audition), *tilāwah* (Qurʾānic litanies) on which he wrote the *Mawāqif* and so on. In these early works Ibnul ʿArabī was not yet aware of any definite system. In the *Futūḥāt*, which he started in 598 at Mecca and finished about three years before his death, i.e. in A.H. 635, we find, even in the earliest parts of it, the rudiments of a system which was already forcing itself upon his mind, but the *Futūḥāt* is so enormous and so disorderly that such rudiments are almost drowned by masses of insignificant or irrelevant details. His *opus magnum* is the celebrated *Fuṣūṣuʾl Ḥikam* (Gems of Philosophy or Bezels of Wisdom), which he finished in 628/1230, ten years before his death. It is one of the most difficult of his works to understand, and without the *Futūḥāt*, which may be looked upon as a large commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, the *Fuṣūṣ* would be, even with such an excellent commentary as that of Qāshānī, most unintelligible and obscure. The general theme of the *Fuṣūṣ* was foreshadowed in the *Futūḥāt* in many places, e.g. *Futūḥāt*, II, pp. 357-77.

On the whole Ibnul ʿArabī may be described as a philosopher of a desultory and eclectic type. His style is ambiguous, probably, as Prof. Browne says, "of a set purpose". There are at least two possible ways of understanding him on any given point; the orthodox way and the pantheistic way, although in reality there is only one way in which he means to express himself, and this is the latter. Whenever Ibnul ʿArabī feels that he has aroused the suspicion of his reader about his orthodoxy, he tries to defend himself against an imaginary person who is challenging him, by giving his style such a turn as to appear orthodox. This was actually done by him when he was once asked what he meant by saying:

O Thou who seest me while I see not Thee,
How often I see Him while He sees not me!

He replied at once, making the following additions which completely altered his original meaning:

O Thou who seest me ever prone to sin,
While Thee I see not willing to upbraid.
How oft I see Him grant His grace's aid,
While He sees me not seeking grace to win.¹

It is not the subject about which Ibnul 'Arabí writes that is difficult to understand, it is the way he expresses it and the peculiar type of the mentality of the man. One feels that there is a conscious effort made by him to complicate the simple and conceal the meaning of whatever he wishes to say, or try to render it utterly unintelligible, particularly when he indulges in wild mystical ravings such as we find in Ḥallāḡ's *Ṭawāṣín*.²

His style, generally speaking, may be described as rampant, discursive and badly lacking form and cohesion. The following are other causes of the ambiguity and unintelligibility of his writings.

(1) The fact that he uses an extraordinary number of terms borrowed from various sources, sometimes completely altering their original meaning, sometimes using them metaphorically. He tries, e.g. to use the terms "the Good" of Plato, "the One" of Plotinus, "the Universal Substance" of the Ash'arites and Allah of Islam for one and the same object. He also uses the terms the "Pen" of the Qur'ān, the "Idea of Ideas" of Plato (adopted later by Origen), the Reality of Mohammed, etc. for Plotinus' First Intellect and so on. Terms like emanation (*ṣayd*) are invariably used metaphorically and others like *ḥaqīqah* are used in more than two or three senses. *Ḥaqīqah*, e.g., is used to mean a reality, an essence, an idea or a category.

(2) The fact that he is always trying to reconcile the orthodox dogmas of Islam with his pantheistic ideas. He

¹ The translation is made by Prof. Browne, *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, II, p. 499. The original verses are mentioned in *Fut.* II, p. 646, and Maqqarī, p. 407.

² See, e.g., *Mawāḡiḡ*, pp. 40, 42, 45, 127, etc.

uses Qur'ānic terms in their usual sense in one passage and explains them mystically or rather pantheistically in another.

(3) Much of his style is too poetical and fantastic to convey strict logical thought. Ibnul 'Arabī's great power of thinking works through his colossal imagination, and much of the logical coherence and consistency which otherwise might have been exhibited in his writings is sacrificed on account of this. He has the imagination of a poet but lacks the poetical sentiment, at least when we compare him with another pantheistic Ṣūfī poet like Ibnul Fāriḍ.

ABBREVIATIONS

I.S. = Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā.

E.I.S. = *Epistles* of Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā.

K.Sch. = *Kleinere Schriften des Ibnul 'Arabī*, ed. Nyberg.

Q.T.R.A. Hallāj = *Quatre Textes Relatifs à Hallāj*.

Fuṣ. = *Fuṣūṣu'l Hikam*, by Ibnul 'Arabī.

Fut. = *Futūḥāt*, by Ibnul 'Arabī.

Enn. = *Enneads*, by Plotinus.

d. = died.

Shah. = Shahrastānī.

Sect. = Section.

com. = commentary.

Qur. = Qur'ān.

Qāsh. = Qāshānī's Com. on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

b. = biography.

b. = ibn.

The three long vowels in Arabic have been represented by three different signs:

- for the long *a* as in the word "salām".

' for the long *i* as in the word "fī".

^ for the long *u* as in the word *Fuṣūṣ*.

CHAPTER I

ONTOLOGY

IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S METAPHYSICAL THEORY OF REALITY

§ I

(a) *Meaning of Being*

Before discussing the doctrine commonly called "Unity of Being" (*wahdat al wujud*) or Pantheism, and before setting forth what I understand to be Ibnul 'Arabí's metaphysical theory of Reality, it is of the utmost importance that the notion of "Being" (*wujud*) and the meaning of the phrase "God is Absolute Being" (*Allah huwa al Wujud al Haqq*) should be made clear.

There are two fundamentally different senses in which the term "Being" may be understood:

- (i) It may mean "Being" as a concept: the *idea* of "Being"; Existence (*wujud bil ma'nā al maṣḍarī*), or
- (ii) It may mean that which has being, i.e. that which exists or subsists (*wujud bi ma'nā maṣḍarī*).

The term "Absolute Being" (*al wujud al muṭlaq*) or "Universal Being" (*al wujud al Kullī*) which Ibnul 'Arabí and his school use to denote a Reality which is the ultimate ground of all that exists, may, therefore, be taken in either of these two senses and we are left in doubt as to which of them is really meant. Is that ultimate "Being" an abstraction—an idea existing only in a mind and uniting in itself, as all universal concepts do, all the species¹ and individuals which come under it? Is it what they call "Secondary Concept" (*ma'qūl thānīn*)? or is it an *Absolute Existing Reality* which is identical with the "All"? Ibnul 'Arabí's language is very highly ambiguous on this subject; he sometimes uses the term "Being" in one sense, sometimes in another, and often

¹ Species of being such as abstract being (being in a mind), concrete being—necessary and contingent being, eternal and temporal being, etc.

mixes the two together. He also uses the word "Absolute" (*mutlaq*) in an equally ambiguous way. At least four different senses in which Ibnul 'Arabí has used the term have been observed:

- (i) Absolute in the sense of being not limited to any particular form but common to *all* forms.
- (ii) Absolute in the sense of not being *in* all forms, but transcending all forms.
- (iii) Absolute as meaning that which is not a "cause" (*'illah*) of anything, i.e. an immediate "cause", and this he calls the self-subsisting and the absolutely independent Being.¹
- (iv) Sometimes, he identifies the "Absolute" with what he calls Reality of Realities (*Ḥaqīqatu'l Ḥaqā'iq*) which, itself, unfortunately, has a double meaning in his writings as we shall see in chapter II on the Logos.

In addition to this he frequently refers to the "Absolute Being" as the "Blindness" (*al 'Amā*) or the "diacritical Point" (*al Nuqtah*) or the Centre of the Circle (*Markaz al dā'ra*) or other equally misleading metaphors.

What do pantheistic Ṣūfís, like Ibnul 'Arabí, mean then by saying that all Being is One and an Absolute Unity? Do they mean that all individual beings—past, present and future—are essentially *One Being*—call it a Universal Substance, Primary Matter or God? Or do they mean that Being in its *abstract* and most universal sense comprises all forms of Being in all possible universes of discourse; or do they mean that the Being of God is the *source* and *cause* of all that has being (existence and subsistence) and, for the sake of convenience, do they liken God's "being" to a "universal" (like colour, say) and the being of any other existent (or subsistent) to a particular "mode" or manifestation of this universal? Is this last sense of being what Ibnul 'Arabí means when he says: "Were it not for the permeation of God, by

¹ See *Fut.* I, p. 52, l. 5 from foot.

means of His form, in all existents, the world would have no existence, just as, were it not for the intelligible universal realities (*al haqā'iq al ma'qūla al kullīyyah*) no predications (*ahkām*) of external objects would be possible."¹

To express the whole matter in modern terminology: Is that "Being" a sort of an *adjectival Determinable* of which all manifestations are determinates, or is it a *substantival Continuant* which is perpetually manifesting itself in different determinate characters under different determinables of size, shape, colour, time and space, etc., etc.?

The confusion between these two senses of the term "Absolute Being", of which Ibnul 'Arabī is certainly guilty, has been the cause of some serious misunderstanding of the real essence of his doctrine. How he fell into this confusion is as follows:

He holds, apparently following the Ishrāqīs,² that "being" (existence as an abstract idea) can be conceived of apart from existing objects, i.e. that we can *mentally* separate "existence" (as a concept) from our concepts of things, e.g. we can separate (mentally) the universal concept "existence" from our concept of horse, man, etc. But although "being" (existence) is regarded by him and the Ishrāqīs as being mentally separable from the *māhiyyāt* (quiddities) of things, it is, they say, identical with and inseparable from things in the external world.³

In addition to this, he believes that Reality as a Substance is ultimately One, and if so, Being (existence as a concept), which is externally identical with existing objects, finds its completest identification in the One Existing Reality which

¹ *Fur.* p. 34.

² For a detailed account of the Ishrāqīs argument see *Hikmatu'l Ishrāq* by Suhrawardī, pp. 182-9, i.e. the question whether the existence of the essences, *māhiyyāt* (quiddities), of things is *mentally* different and separable from them or whether it is mentally identical with them. Their dictum is "that existence is identical with the essence (quiddity) of things in the external world but separate from them in our minds: mentally, it is a *predicate* (*maḥmūl*) which we make of quiddities".

³ Cf. *K.Sch.* pp. 5, 6.

is the source of all that has existence. From this it follows that Absolute Existence which cannot be anything but a "universal concept" and Absolute Reality (*al Ḥaqqu-l Muṭlaq*) which is an existing "Object" coincide. To no other object can Absolute Being (existence) be applied except to Absolute Reality which is *the Universal Existent*. All that we are acquainted with has but a *limited* existence and this, Ibnul 'Arabī would say, cannot be the origin of itself. There must, therefore, be an *Absolute* Existence which is the source of all limited existences. And so it was immaterial to him whether he should use the term "Absolute Being" to mean "Absolute Existence" or "Absolute Existent", since they both refer to One Reality and they are both *externally* identical with it, i.e. that Reality which is an Absolute Being is actually one with Absolute Existence, though they may be separated in thought. So the statement that Reality (Being) is one and a unity, or Existence is one and a unity, expresses one and the same fact. When Ibnul 'Arabī says that Absolute Existence is the source and cause of all existence, he simply means that Absolute Reality (Being) is the source and cause of all beings. It is absurd to hold as Taftāzānī and Jurjānī seem to have done¹ that Ibnul 'Arabī means by God the abstract concept *wujūd* which has no external existence, yet is the source of all external existence. Taftāzānī, in particular, attacks Ibnul 'Arabī most vehemently on this point which he seems to have misunderstood. He takes the phrase Absolute Being (*wujūd muṭlaq*) literally to mean absolute existence as a secondary concept (*ma' qūl thānin* or *mafhūm kullī*) and omits the other sense altogether. Writers who wrongly attribute such a view to Ibnul 'Arabī remark:

- (i) That abstract existence (existence as a concept) is itself not an external reality and cannot possibly be the source of external realities. On the contrary "existence", if we regard it as a universal, is, itself, based on and

¹ See *Majmū' al Rasā'il fi Wahdat al Wujūd*, pp. 5, 13, 14, 15, etc.

derived from existing objects in which it is manifested. From combining in our mind, the idea of existence and the *māhiyyah* (quiddity) of Man—as a rational being—we can never hope, neither can God, to produce Man in the external world. This leads to a second remark.

- (ii) That “existence” (as a concept) is *mentally* posterior to particular existents in the external world.

But Ibnul ‘Arabí does not mean that. The real source of all beings is what he calls “*Absolute Being*” in the sense of a *Reality* or a *Being* whose existence is identical with its Essence (*mawjūdun bi wujūdun huwa ‘aynuhu*)—a Being whose existence is necessary (*wājibu’l wujūdu li dhātihi*). This Essence is at once all the realised and the realisable *māhiyyāt* (quiddities) in the external world with all their properties and accidents, and upon this Essence, its existence and manifestations, the human mind bases its notion of “abstract existence”. It is, as will be shown later, identical with the *Universal Substance* of the Ash‘arites.

(b) *Can Existence be separated in Thought or in the External World from the “māhiyyāt” (quiddities) of Things?*

I have already hinted at the source of the confusion Ibnul ‘Arabí usually makes between the two senses of the term *wujūd* (being or existence) and in what sense he uses the phrase *al wujūd al muṭlaq aṣl kulli wujūd* (Absolute existence is the source of all existence) when he separates *in thought* Absolute existence from the Absolute Existent, i.e. God. But can existence be separated even *in thought* from the *māhiyyah* of that which has existence? Ibnul ‘Arabí and the Ishrāqīs, whom he follows here, answer in the affirmative. But can we conceive of the *māhiyyah* of God, or indeed of anything else, and its existence *as apart* from one another? What is the *māhiyyah* of anything except our concept of it which exists (or rather subsists) in our mind? How, then, can we possibly separate the idea or concept of a thing which already exists in our mind from its existence?

To talk about anything whatever means that we presuppose its existence in one "universe of discourse" or other, and to say that a thing can be conceived of *apart from* its existence *in any universe of discourse whatever* is meaningless nonsense. It is true we can separate the *idea* of a thing from the thing itself, and the intelligible existence (or rather subsistence) of an idea from the external existence of a concrete object, but this is not what they mean. The fundamental error the Ishrāqīs and Ibnul 'Arabī seem to have made is in interpreting the existential proposition "*S* exists" as equivalent to the proposition "*S* has the *quality* '*e*'" (*e* = existence), i.e. treating the existential proposition as a predication one: they predicate existence of *māhiyyāt*. So regarding "existence" as a *quality* as the Ishrāqīs and Ibnul 'Arabī seem to do, the affirmative proposition "*S* is *e*" (where *e* = existence) means that *S*, which already exists (at least in our mind) has the *quality* of existence, which is tautology. On the other hand, the negative proposition *S* is *é* (where *é* = non-existent) means that *S*, which exists (at least in our mind), has not the *quality e* (existence) which is self-contradictory. In every proposition such as "*s* is *p*" (*p* being a real quality) there is always involved the existential proposition "*S* is", and the meaning of the proposition "*S* is" is that some adjectives other than those involved in the connotation of the term *S* can be significantly predicated of *S*, and the meaning of the proposition "*S* is not" is that there are no true adjectives which can be significantly predicated of *S* other than those involved in its connotation: *S* itself always having a definite connotation and existing, at least, in our mind.

This is another way of proving that what Ibnul 'Arabī says about Absolute Being (or Existence) as the source of all existence reduces itself to saying that Absolute Being which is identical with and inseparable from an Absolute Existent is the ultimate source and ground of all existence and all that exists.

(c) *Being and Existence. Not-Being and Not-Existent*

Ibnul 'Arabí draws an important distinction between "being" and "existence", regarding the latter as a species of the former. Everything that has being may be said to have existence if manifested in one or the other of what he calls *'awālim* or *marātib* (planes or stages) of "being". These he limits to four: (a) being of a thing in the external world (*wujūd al shay'ī fi 'aynīhi*), (b) intelligible being (*wujūd al shay'ī fi-l 'ilm*), (c) being of a thing in spoken words (*wujūd al shay'ī fi-l alfāẓ*), and (d) being of a thing in script (*wujūd al shay'ī fi-l ruqūm*), and everything that has "being", be it temporal or eternal, must exist in one or the other or in all of these "stages". Anything that does not exist in all or some of them is a pure not-being and nothing further can be said about it. But Ibnul 'Arabí uses the term "not-being", without the qualification "pure" or "absolute", in quite a different sense, as we shall see later. A thing may be said to be a not-being if it does not exist in one of these "planes of being" but exists in another; then it is a not-being in that particular "plane" in which it does not exist. The greatest mistake which he seems to have made here is in his regarding the forms of "being" in all these four "planes" as belonging to the same kind. He does not limit, as he ought to have done, the term "existent" to things in the external world which manifest themselves in time and space, in contradistinction to the intelligible species known in modern philosophy as abstracta which only *subsist* in a mind. It is true that a table (the concrete object itself), the concept of a table, the word "table" and the letters *t a b l e* all refer to one and the same reality, but the existence of the table itself in the external world is fundamentally different from that of the concept of the word, and that of the script. We cannot possibly say as Ibnul 'Arabí does, that the table is and is not at the same time, by which he means that it exists, say as a concept, but does not exist as a concrete object, without

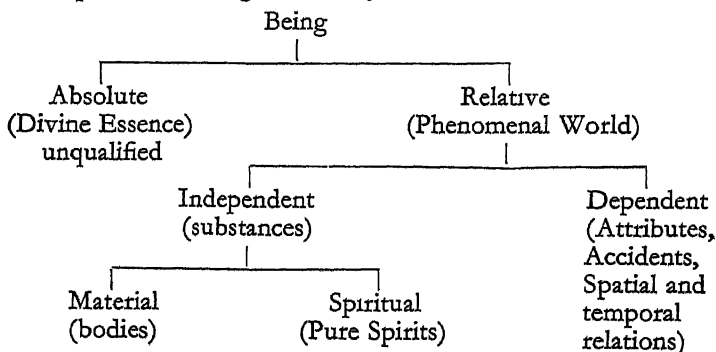
making the fundamental distinction between the existence of a concept and that of a concrete object. All that we are entitled to say is that the *real* table does not exist—the concept “table” subsists in a mind.

With regard to God, Ibnul ‘Arabí adds, things have only two “planes” of being, (a) intelligible and (b) concrete, and things have existence in God’s knowledge prior to their existence in the external world. For us, on the other hand, things must have a concrete existence before we form any concepts of them.

On this erroneous argument Ibnul ‘Arabí bases some of the most vital points of his system, such as the eternity or temporality, the existence or non-existence of the universe. The universe (and he says the same about Man)¹ is both eternal and temporal; existent and not-existent. It is eternal because it exists in the eternal knowledge of God, and temporal as a concrete and external “form”, and the same may be said about its being an existent and not-existent. Fortunately Ibnul ‘Arabí uses a different line of argument in supporting the same view of the two aspects of the universe—i.e. its being both eternal and temporal—being and not-being—using the antithesis of substance and form, which will be considered later.

(d) *The Species of Being*

The Species of Being as held by Ibnul ‘Arabí are as follows:



¹ See *Fuṣṣ.* p. 19. Cf. *Inshā'ud Dawā'ir*, K.Sch. pp. 5-6.

Relative "being" may be actual like all physical objects in the phenomenal world or potential (sometimes he calls it "Possible").

By Not-Being Ibnul 'Arabī means, as I have already explained, either

- (i) things which have no existence in *any* of the "planes" of Being, i.e. the pure non-existent (*al 'adamul maḥḍ*);
- or (ii) things which exist in one plane and not in another, under which we may class
 - (1) things which exist only as ideas or concepts in a mind and cannot possibly exist in the external world,
 - (2) things which are possible or even probable existents, but which do not actually exist in the external world.

The "pure not-being" can never itself be an object of our thought: other non-existents can and actually are. When we imagine we know a pure not-being: a '*adam maḥḍ*', what we really know is its opposite (its logical contradictory), or the reason for its non-existence (*al sharṭ al muṣabbiḥu li nafyihī*).¹

(e) *Necessity: Contingency and Impossibility*

By a necessary being is meant a being whose existence is self-necessitated, i.e. it exists *per se*: and this is God alone. A contingent being is that for whose existence there is no essential or necessary reason, i.e. its being and not-being are equally possible. An impossible being is one whose non-existence is necessitated by some formal reason.

On Ibnul 'Arabī's doctrine there is no place for the "possible" (or contingent) in spite of the fact that he calls the *a'yān al thābita* "possible beings". In reality, according to him they are necessary in the sense that they are potentialities which *must* of necessity be actualised. They are what the Philosophers call *wājib al wujūdi bi-l ghayr*, that of which the

¹ See *K.Sch.* p. 11.

existence is made necessary by another. He seems in conflict with the Philosophers when he says "that they deny the category of the contingent *al mumkin* on the ground that all that exists is either necessary in itself or made necessary through another being whose existence is necessary in itself *wājibu-l wujūdi bi-l ghayr*". He adds: "but the gnostic (*‘ārif*) admits (which is only a verbal admission) contingency and knows its (real) place (i.e. as a mere logical correlative of necessity) and what the contingent means and whence it is contingent and the fact that (in reality) it is identical with *wājibu-l wujūdi bi-l ghayr*".¹ But what he himself says is substantially identical with the view of the Philosophers whom he quotes say. In fact he emphatically denies the contingent, in the sense quoted above, and admits only two categories: the necessary (the two species of necessary explained above) and the impossible.²

§ II (i)

(a) *The One and the Many: "Ḥaqq and Khalq"*

According to Ibnul ‘Arabí there is only One Reality in existence. This Reality we view from two different angles, now calling it *Ḥaqq* (the Real) when we regard it as the Essence of all phenomena; and now *Khalq* when we regard it as the phenomena manifesting that Essence. *Ḥaqq* and *Khalq*: Reality and Appearance; the One and the Many are only names for two subjective aspects of One Reality; it is a real unity but empirical diversity. This Reality is God. "If you regard Him through Him", Ibnul ‘Arabí says (i.e. if you regard the Essence from the point of view of the Essence), "then He regards Himself through Himself, which is the state of unity; but if you regard Him through yourself (i.e. from your point of view as a form) then the unity

¹ *Fus.* pp. 66-7.

² *K. Sch.* p. 10: "In existence there are no contingents whatever: things are either impossible or necessary."

vanishes.”¹ This seems to echo Plotinus’ doctrine that the Primal One is everywhere and nowhere. But there is a fundamental difference between the two doctrines as will be shown later. Plotinus’ One is everywhere as a *Cause*: Ibnul ‘Arabī’s One is everywhere as an *Essence*, and nowhere as the universal Essence which is above all “where” and “how” and which is different from all things that have “where” and “how”.²

Numerous passages can be cited which would illustrate this cardinal point of Ibnul ‘Arabī’s system. The following are very characteristic: “Unity has no other meaning than two (or more) things being *actually* identical but *conceptually* distinguishable the one from the other; so in one sense the one *is* the other; in another, *it is not*.”³ “Multiplicity is due to different points of view, not to an actual division in the One Essence (*‘ayn*).”⁴

The whole of Ibnul ‘Arabī’s metaphysics rests on this distinction and there is not a single point in his system where it is not introduced in some form or other.⁵ Although the epistemic side of the issue is often confused in his writings with the ontological side, it is abundantly clear that he does not wish to assert a *real* duality of being. Ontologically there is but One Reality; epistemically there are two *aspects*: a Reality which transcends the Phenomenal World and a multiplicity of *subjectivities* which find their ultimate explanation and ground in the essential unity of the Real.

Ibnul ‘Arabī sometimes distinguishes between these two aspects on logical grounds. The manifold existents in the external world are contingent, temporal and dependent for their existence on something which must of necessity be

¹ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 147.

² Cf. *Enn.* III, 9, 3.

³ *Fuṣṣ.* I, p. 623, l. 14.

⁴ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 417. Cf. *Fuṣṣ.* p. 117, where he speaks of *al Haqq* and *al Khalq* as the Inward and Outward aspects of the One.

⁵ See, e.g., Sections on Transcendence and Immanence: the *‘ayān al thābitah*. Ibnul ‘Arabī’s Pantheistic Doctrine: Causality, etc., etc.

self-subsistent, eternal, independent, and necessary.¹ The One stands to the Many in the relation of a continuant to its occurrents or a substance to its accidents,² logically different from them but actually one with them.³ It is the relation of the outward to the inward—of what we know to the unknowable incommunicable Essence (*ḥumyyah*) of God.⁴

Owing to our finite minds and our inability to grasp the *Whole as a Whole*, we regard it as a plurality of beings, ascribing to each one characteristics which distinguish it from the rest. Only a person possessed of the vision of a mystic, Ibnul 'Arabī would say, can transcend, in a super-mental state of intuition, all the multiplicity of forms and "see" the Reality that underlies them.⁵ What seems to multiply the One is the *ahkām* (predications) which we predicate of external objects—the fact that we bring them under categories of colour, size, shape and temporal and spatial relations, etc. In itself the One is simple and indivisible.

To express it in theological language as Ibnul 'Arabī sometimes does, the One is *al Ḥaqq* (the Real = God), the Many are *al Khalq* (created beings = Phenomenal World):⁶ the One is the Lord, the Many are the slaves;⁷ the One is a unity (*jam'*), the Many are a diversity (*farq*),⁸ and so on.

Now, we are in a position to understand the apparent paradoxes in which Ibnul 'Arabī often revels—such as "the Creator is the created", "I am He and He is I", "I am He and not He", "*Ḥaqq* is *Khalq* and *Khalq* is *Ḥaqq*", "*Ḥaqq* is not *Khalq* and *Khalq* is not *Ḥaqq*", and so on and so on.⁹ Explained on his relative notion of the two aspects of Reality, these paradoxes are no paradoxes at all.

¹ See *Fus.* pp. 27–8, 180.

² See *Fus.* p. 225.

³ See *Fus.* p. 101.

⁴ See *Fus.* p. 174.

⁵ This will be fully treated in Ibnul 'Arabī's theory of Mysticism and *Fanā'*.

⁶ *Fus.* pp. 137–8, 197, etc., etc.

⁷ *Fus.* pp. 196, 272, etc., etc.

⁸ *Fus.* pp. 283, etc., etc.

⁹ See *Fus.* pp. 102, 107, 110, 137, 138, 197, 219, 220, 283, and *Fut.* I, p. 899, the verses.

There is a complete reciprocity between the One and the Many as understood by Ibnul 'Arabí and a complete mutual dependence. Like two logical correlatives, neither has any meaning without the other. Allowing for some poetical element in his Philosophy, this reciprocity is as well expressed as it can be by a mystic, in his extraordinary verses:

He praises me and I praise Him,
And He worships me and I worship Him.
In one state I acknowledge Him
And in the *a'yān* I deny Him.
He knows me and I know him not,
And I know Him and behold Him.
How can He be independent,
When I help Him and assist Him?
In my knowing Him, I create Him.
Thus we are informed in the Tradition,¹
And in me His object is realised.² .

(b) *Ibnul 'Arabí's Absolute Monism and Hallāj's Dualism*

In Ibnul 'Arabí's monistic theory three distinct elements are united: the Ash'arite theory of universal substance, Hallāj's theory of *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt* and the Neoplatonic theory of the One. His own doctrine is identical with none of these, but a combination of all. The Hallājian element in particular is predominant in Ibnul 'Arabí's view about the One and the Many. Although sometimes he uses the terms "form" (*ṣūrah*) and "essence" (*dhāt*) as equivalent to Hallāj's *Nāsūt* and *Lāhūt* and sometimes actually uses the terms *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt* themselves,³ the difference between Hallāj and Ibnul 'Arabí remains ultimately fundamental. But in spite of this, Hallāj seems to have paved the way for Ibnul 'Arabí's pantheistic doctrine. It was through Hallāj, there seems to be no doubt, that the Hellenistic doctrine of the duality of the

¹ The Prophetic Tradition in which God is supposed to have said *qad maithilalūni bayna a'yunihim* (and they have represented me (as a figure standing) before their eyes).

² *Fus.* pp. 124-5.

³ *Fus.* pp. 194, 260, 400, etc., etc.

world, expressed in his theory of "Length and Breadth"¹ (*tūl wa 'ard*) (by which he means spiritual and material) found its way into Ibnul 'Arabī's doctrine. It is evident that Ibnul 'Arabī's *'ālamu-l amr*, *'ālamu-l ghayb*, *'ālamu-l arwāḥ* and *'ālamu-l ma'ānī* are identical with Ḥallāj's Length (*tūl*, *Lāhūt*), and Ibnul 'Arabī's *'ālamu-l khalq*, *'ālamu-l ṭabī'ah* *'ālamu-l aysād*, etc. are identical with Ḥallāj's Breadth (*'ard*, *Nāsūt*). But since the time of Ḥallāj, the two terms *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt*, which for him meant two ultimately different *natures* (different *beings*), underwent radical modification. In the writings of both Ibnul 'Arabī and Ibnul Fāriḍ we find these two terms reduced to mere *aspects* of Reality. *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt* (divinity and humanity, essence and form) become simply names for the outward and inward aspects of the One. They are complementary sides of one nature, and both are given equal places in the monistic theory of Ibnul 'Arabī and Ibnul Fāriḍ. Consider, e.g., the following celebrated verse from Ibnul Fāriḍ:

And my divinity did not make me neglectful of my "appearance",
Nor did my humanity (*nāsūt*) make me forget the "form" through
which my wisdom is manifested.

As for Ibnul 'Arabī, his books abound with passages expressing the same idea. With these two mystics "there is no more", as Massignon remarks, "as with Ḥallāj, that initial difference *in level* which engenders the energy, i.e. that difference in potential between positions which determines the current between the Real and the Phenomenal" (*al Ḥaqq wa-l Khalq*). It is true that Ḥallāj sometimes expresses himself in a remarkably similar style to that of Ibnul 'Arabī, but we must not attach too much importance to this verbal resemblance. The ideas underlying the words are different in the two cases. Ḥallāj was neither a Philosopher, nor did he ever intend to formulate a philosophic system.

Ḥallāj, e.g., says: "And the Real is (identical with) the Phenomenal:² . . . in virtue of the Real (element in the Phe-

¹ See *Ṭawāṣīn*, Massignon, p. 141. Cf. *Fut.* I, p. 219. ² *Ṭawāṣīn*, p. 23.

RELATION BETWEEN THE ONE AND THE MANY IS
 nomenal)", and somewhere else he says: "And I am the
 Real, for I have never ceased to be real through the Real"
 (*wa ana'l Haqq fa-innani mā ziltu abadan bi-l Haqqi haqqan*), and
 addressing himself to God he says: "There is no difference
 between me and Thee except the Godhead and Lordship"
 (*al ilāhiyyah wa-l rubūbiyyah*).¹ "O He who is I, and I am He:
 there is no difference between my *anniyyah* and Thy *Huwiyyah*
 except temporalness and eternity",² and so on—thus ad-
 mitting all the time the reality of the *two elements* or natures in
 Man, the divine and the human, and allowing them under
 certain mystical conditions to become united. Then and only
 then can the phenomenal (the human) call itself the Real.
 Ibnul 'Arabī, on the other hand, admits neither "union" (in
 this sense) nor fusion nor incarnation. He either speaks of
One Reality or of *two aspects* of Reality keeping the distinction
 between them always rigid and clear before his mind. He
 alludes to Ḥallāj's *Ana'l Haqq* in a verse in which he also in-
 tends to refute Ḥallāj's theory of incarnation. He says: "I am
 the mystery (secret) of the Real not the Real Himself" (*ana*
sirru-l Haqqi ma-l Haqqu anā); the mystery here being the
 Phenomenal aspect in which the Real is disguised; the two
 are always there, and there is no sense in saying that one
becomes the other.

(c) *The way Ibnul 'Arabī expresses the Relation between the
 One and the Many: the Real and the Phenomenal*

The relation between the One and the Many which has just
 been explained in its logical and theological aspects is often
 explained in Ibnul 'Arabī's books by means of metaphors of
 the highest ambiguity, and the utmost care should be taken
 in understanding them. The least error that can result from
 misinterpreting such metaphors is the assumption that
 Ibnul 'Arabī is really a theist rather than a pantheist or that
 he is a dualist rather than a monist.

¹ Q.T.R.A. Ḥallāj, Massignon, p. 62.

² Q.T.R.A. Ḥallāj, Massignon, pp. 59-60.

There is a considerable number of these metaphors in his *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt*, but it will suffice to give only a few.

(i) The metaphor of the "mirror" and "images" which is closely allied to that of the object and its shadow.¹ The One is regarded as an object whose image is reflected in different mirrors, the images appearing in different forms and shapes according to the nature of each mirror (locus). The Many (Phenomenal World) is the mirror-images, the Shadow of the Real Object beyond. The whole world is like a shadow play. "We are sufficiently far", he says, "from the screen on which the phenomenal objects are reflected to believe that what we see (on the screen) is all that is real."² He is well aware of the ambiguity of this metaphor, and wishing to rule out any implication of duality, he definitely states that the source of the shadow and the shadow itself are one.³

(ii) The metaphor of "Permeation" and "Spiritual food".⁴ The Many permeate the One in the sense in which qualities (colour, say) permeate substances. The One, on the other hand, permeates the Many as food permeates a body, God is our sustaining spiritual "food", because He is our Essence. The Phenomenal World is also His "food" because it is through it that God is endowed with Attributes (*ahkām*). Both Ibnul 'Arabī and Ḥallāj hold that the spiritual governs and controls the material everywhere: the One universal substance abides in all and governs all. But with Ḥallāj this is no metaphor: with Ibnul 'Arabī it must be regarded as such, or the whole of his system would fall to the ground.

¹ For the first see *Fuṣ*. pp. 13-14, 49-50, 363-4, also p. 306, where he says that the Phenomenal World is but a dream. For the second see *Fuṣ*. pp. 170, 174, 177.

² *Fut*. III, p. 89.

³ *Fuṣ*, p. 174.

⁴ For the first see *Fuṣ*. pp. 114, 117, 126; for the second see *Fuṣ*. pp. 123-4, 273, 373. The second metaphor is originally Tustarī's as Ibnul 'Arabī himself remarks. Ibnul 'Arabī gives a different reading of Tustarī's saying in his *Mawāqīf al Nuṣūb*, p. 66. He says that Tustarī was once asked: "What is food?" to which he replied: "The contemplation of the Living One." In his *Fut*. and *Fuṣ*. he quotes the same saying, omitting the word contemplation. See *Fut*. IV, pp. 319-20.

(iii) Metaphors of "Vessels" and "returning",¹ both of which strongly suggest a duality of being. The One is the ultimate source from which the Many spring and to which they shall return and "the Many are to the One like a vessel (*inā*) in which His Essence subsists".

(iv) The mathematical metaphors of number "one" and the diacritical point, and the centre of a circle.² According to Ibnul 'Arabī the One stands to the Many in the same relation as the mathematical one stands to the infinite numbers based on it. But although numbers are based on "one", it would be absurd to call them manifestations of "one" in the sense that phenomenal objects are manifestations of the One. Numbers are *aggregates* of units of ones and if the analogy holds good we should regard the phenomenal objects as *conglomerations of units* each of which is the One, which they are not, not even in Ibnul 'Arabī's view.

(v) The analogy of the body and its members,³ which if taken literally would mean that the One is an organic Whole, any "part" of which may be said to be different from any other "part", while no "part" has significance except in relation to the Whole. The One, then, would be regarded as a Whole with infinite parts—i.e. as One Organic System with an Essence underlying it. It is reasonable for a monist or even a pantheist to hold such a view, but it is questionable whether the Phenomenal World, so far as we know it, possesses such a unity of being. The highest form of unity, with which we are acquainted, is that of a human mind, but the universe, as a whole does not seem to possess this kind of unity. In Ibnul 'Arabī's System Matter is too spiritualised to be material: theoretically, therefore, the whole Universe may be One Universal Spirit possessing even a higher degree of unity than that of a human mind.

¹ For the first, see *Fus.* p. 127; for the second, *Fus.* p. 329.

² See for the first, *Fus.* pp. 103, 106, etc., and for the third, *Fus.* I, p. 339. The first is the commonest metaphor used by Ṣūfīs to illustrate this relation.

³ See *Fus.* p. 363.

Such is the manner in which Ibnul 'Arabí explains this vital point of his Philosophy, but no metaphor whatever can be adequate to serve as a medium for expressing a philosophical theory. He does not appeal, neither does he ask us to appeal, to intellect and formal reasoning in order to apprehend such a doctrine. On the contrary the ultimate solution of the problem rests with the super-mental intuition of the mystic, which, alone, perceives the unity as a unity.

Ibnul 'Arabí warns us that should we maintain a distinction between the Real and the Phenomenal (*Ḥaqq wa Khalq*), thus explained as Essence and Form or Reality and Appearance, etc., etc.—we should not, even on his doctrine, predicate of one what is predicable of the other, except in the strict sense of regarding them as ultimately and essentially One.¹ Everything is a reality (*ḥaqq*) but not *the* Real (*al-Ḥaqq*): the "Slave" is a slave and the "Lord" is "Lord".² The One Essence transcends all the forms and whatever characteristics belong to them. The Many have two aspects: (a) as different from one another and from the One (logically)—this is the aspect of difference (*jibatu-l farq*); (b) as essentially identical with one another and with the One (actually)—this is the aspect of unity (*jibatu-l jam'*). The former aspect is summed up in what Ibnul 'Arabí calls contingency (*imkān*); slavery (*'ubūdiyyah*) and temporalness (*hudūth*); the latter in what he calls necessity (*wujūb*); lordship (*rubūbiyyah*), and eternity (*qidam*) and so on, and now we know in what sense the slave is the lord and the apparent is the real, and in what sense we should interpret Ibnul 'Arabí's Paradoxes.²

§ II (ii)

Transcendence and Immanence

We have already seen that the duality of *Ḥaqq* and *Khalq* is not on Ibnul 'Arabí's view a real duality of beings but a duality of what we might call differentiating attributes. These

¹ *Fus.* p. 272.

² *Fus.* pp. 142, 150, etc., etc.

differentiating attributes are identified in his philosophy with what he calls transcendence and immanence. The two Arabic terms (*tashbīh* and *tanẓīh*) which were for a long time used by Moslem theologians to mean the comparability and incomparability of God to created beings in connection with the doctrines of anthropomorphism and corporealism, seem to have undergone a serious modification at the hands of Ibnul 'Arabī, who uses them in a more philosophical sense. An anthropomorphist (*mushabbih*) or a corporealist (*mujassim*) of the old school is one who attributes to God qualities which are analogous to those of men and other created beings. A transcendentalist (*munazzih*) is one who holds that God is above all such qualities. In this sense a man may very well be an anthropomorphist or a corporealist without being a pantheist, i.e. God may very well be assumed to have qualities and attributes comparable to those of men and physical objects and yet to remain different from, and not in any way identical with either men or other physical objects or with the whole universe. On Ibnul 'Arabī's doctrine such a position could not possibly be maintained. Transcendence and immanence (*tanẓīh* and *tashbīh*) had to be used in a different sense. The assertion that God "hears" or "sees" or has "hands", etc., etc., which anthropomorphists make, is not understood by Ibnul 'Arabī to mean that God possesses "hearing" or "sight" or "hands", etc., but rather that He is *immanent* in all that hears, sees or has hands.¹ He hears and sees in every being that hears and sees, and this constitutes His immanence (*tashbīh*). On the other hand, His Essence is not limited to one being or a group of beings that hear and see, but is manifested in *all* such beings and in *all* beings whatever. In this sense God is transcendent because He is above all limitation and individualisation. As a universal substance, He is the Essence of all that is. Thus Ibnul 'Arabī reduces *tanẓīh* and *tashbīh* to absoluteness (*iṭlāq*) and limitedness (*taqyīd*)² and uses the terms in a more or less

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 468.

² Cf. Qāshānī's *Com. on the Fus.* p. 457.

materialistic sense, but in a sense fundamentally different from that of the theologians. Ibnul 'Arabí emphatically denies anthropomorphism and corporealism in the sense explained above. In everything with which God describes Himself in the Qur'ân, the *two aspects* of transcendence and immanence must be observed. The Qur'ân says that God has hands and feet, etc. This, Ibnul 'Arabí holds, is true not in the anthropomorphic sense that He has hands and feet *comparable* to those of men, but in the sense that He is *essentially* the hands and feet of all that have hands and feet.¹ His manifestation in such limited forms as hands and feet, etc., constitutes His *tashbîh*, but His being in Himself above such limitations constitutes His *tanẓîh*. On the same grounds Ibnul 'Arabí denies the Christian doctrine of incarnation (*hulûl*). To say that Christ is God is true, he says, in the sense that everything else is God, and to say that Christ is the Son of Mary is also true, but to say that God is Christ the Son of Mary is false, because this would imply that He is Christ and nothing else.² God is you and I and everything else in the Universe. He is all that is perceptible and imperceptible; material or spiritual. It is infidelity (*kuf'r*) to say that He is you *alone* or I *alone* or Christ *alone* or to limit Him in any form whatever, even in a conceptual form. When a man says that he has seen God in a dream with such and such colour, size or form, all that He wishes to say is that God has *revealed* Himself to him in one of His infinite forms, for He reveals Himself in intelligible as well as in concrete forms. So what the man has really seen is a form of God not God Himself.³

Ibnul 'Arabí holds that transcendence and immanence are two fundamental aspects of Reality as we know it. Neither of them would be sufficient without the other if we want to give a complete account of Reality. He also holds that Islam

¹ *Fut.* I, pp. 122-3. Ibnul 'Arabí interprets all the anthropomorphic passages of the Qur'ân in this way: see e.g. *Fus.* pp. 77-8.

² See *Fus.* p. 267.

³ This is the meaning of Ibnul 'Arabí's saying that God is a mere phrase: see *Fus.* p. 360.

is the only religion which asserts both aspects in an equal degree. Noah's religion, he says, was one-sided because it laid too much emphasis on transcendence, but it had to do so to counteract a prevailing polytheism.¹ His whole attitude is summed up in the following verses:

If you assert (pure) transcendence you limit God,
And if you assert (pure) immanence you define Him.
But if you assert both things, you follow the right course,
And you are a leader and a master in gnosis.
He who asserts duality is a polytheist,
And he who asserts oneness is a unitarian.
Beware of *tashbīh* if you couple (i.e. God and universe),
And beware of *tanẓīh* if you assert oneness.
You are not He, nay, you are He, and you see Him in
The *a'yān* of things, absolute and limited.²

"The *Ḥaqq* of whom transcendence is asserted is the same as the *Khālq* of whom immanence is asserted although (logically) the creator is distinguished from the created."³

Although Ibnul 'Arabī asserts that everything and all things are God (the immanent aspect) he takes care not to assert the converse, i.e. that God is all things in the sense of being an aggregation of existents. God is the unity behind the multiplicity and the Reality behind the Appearance (the transcendent aspect).

On any pantheistic doctrine either God or the universe is bound to suffer: either the phenomenal world, as we know it, is a mere illusion, the Real being God alone; or God is a mere fabrication of the human mind, and the Phenomenal World is the only Reality. Ibnul 'Arabī chooses the former alternative as we shall see in the Section on Pantheism. The

¹ See *Fus.* pp. 78-82. Cf. *Fus.* p. 356 about the knowledge of Idrīs, who exaggerated pure transcendence and therefore was ignorant of half the truth. Ibnul 'Arabī says the same about the true knowledge of the angels. This is a point where the Perfect Man who knows both aspects proves to be more perfect in his knowledge of God even than the angels. He sees God in everything and knows that His being pervades all forms: *Fus.* p. 357.

² *Fus.* pp. 76-7. Cf. *Fus.* p. 151.

³ *Fus.* p. 106.

assertion of transcendence saves him from falling into gross materialism.

The sort of transcendence hitherto discussed is the sort asserted by the unaided *intellect*. Ibnul 'Arabî goes a step farther when he says that it is not transcendence as *asserted* by *man* which explains the real nature of God as the Absolute. Even the most abstract transcendence (conceived by man) is a form of limitation,¹ because it implies, at least, the existence of an asserter besides that of God. Further, to assert anything of anything is to limit it; therefore, the *assertion* even of absolute transcendence of God is a limitation.² The assertion, made by the intellect, of the transcendence of God is only a convenient way of contrasting the two aspects of Reality as we understand it, but it does not explain its nature. Such transcendence, which is regarded by the philosophers as the sole characteristic of God is, when it is not coupled with immanence, an abomination on Ibnul 'Arabî's view. He condemns the philosophers on the ground that they base everything on the intellect which, by virtue of its nature, cannot rise above deductive knowledge based upon the understanding of the *Phenomenal* World. Ḥallāj whom Ibnul 'Arabî follows here, expresses the whole position in the following words: "*Tawḥid* (unification which is equivalent to Ibnul 'Arabî's transcendence) belongs to the *Mumabḥid*, not to God, since God is above all assertions."³ No one, except God Himself, knows His real transcendent aspect. In other words, no one except God can fully comprehend His essential unity. The perfect Ṣūfî, in his ecstatic flight, might have a glimpse of this unity, not through the intellect but by means of super-mental intuition which belongs only to such a state.⁴ This higher form of transcendence is independent of all assertion. It belongs to the divine Essence

¹ *Fus.* p. 70. Cf. *Fus.* p. 138.

² *Fus.* p. 193.

³ *Tawāṣṣu*, p. 58.

⁴ Cf. Palacios' *Abenmasarra*, pp. 67-8. Even then such Ṣūfîs are in a permanent state of bewilderment. They move in a circle (i.e. God): they begin and end with God. Their movement is called by Ibnul 'Arabî "the circular movement round the Pole". See *Fus.* pp. 89-90.

per se and *a se* and it is what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the transcendence of the unity (*tanẓih al tanhíd*).¹ The absolute unity and simplicity of the divine Essence is only known to the divine Essence—there is no duality of subject and object, knower and known. This form of transcendence is not the same as that which we usually contrast with immanence, for this latter belongs to the intellect as the logical correlative of immanence. It is predicable of God as *al Haqq* when contrasted with the Phenomenal World—*al Khalq*, and is ultimately *subjective*. The former (higher) transcendence is *objective* and follows from the nature of the Absolute Himself. Of such transcendence we have no knowledge and cannot take it as a part of our definition of God. The only possible definition of God, so far as God is definable at all, is by means of *transcendence as contrasted with immanence*. God is in everything, yet above all things, which is a description rather than a definition. But even such a definition (or a description) would contain, Ibnul 'Arabí urges, definitions of all beings, actual and potential, physical and spiritual,² and since a complete knowledge of everything is an impossibility for man, a complete definition of God therefore is impossible.

Having made a distinction between God and the universe, *al Haqq* and *al Khalq*, on the one hand, and a distinction between the Godhead and the divine Essence on the other, and having pointed out the difference between the kind of transcendence *asserted* of the Godhead and the transcendence that *belongs* to the Essence *per se*, Ibnul 'Arabí concludes by saying that the so-called attributes of transcendence (*ṣifāt al tanẓih*) should be predicated of the *Godhead* (*al Haqq*) not of the Essence, for the Essence, in its bare abstraction, is attributeless. These attributes of transcendence are summed up in what he calls absoluteness (*itlāq*) as contrasted with the limitedness (*taq'yid*) of the Phenomenal World.

To the divine Essence explained above Ibnul 'Arabí some-

¹ *Fut.* II, pp. 763–8.

² *Fus.* p. 73.

times applies the pronoun "He", for the Essence alone is the absolute *Ghayb* (unseen).¹

To sum up all that Ibnul 'Arabí says about transcendence:

We must distinguish two fundamentally different kinds of transcendence.

(1) That which belongs to the divine Essence *per se* and *a se*—the absolute simplicity and unity of the One—the state of the *Ahadiyyah*.

(2) Transcendence asserted by the intellect, which must be always coupled with immanence and which may assume the following forms:

- (a) God may be called transcendent in the sense of being absolute; or
- (b) He may be called transcendent in the sense of being a necessary being, self-begotten, self-caused, etc., in contradistinction to the contingent, created or caused beings of the Phenomenal World; or
- (c) He may be called transcendent in the sense that He is unknowable and incommunicable and beyond all proof.

This second kind of transcendence Ibnul 'Arabí condemns if taken by itself (i.e. without immanence) to be an explanation of the whole truth about Reality. Reality as Ibnul 'Arabí understands it has both aspects: transcendence and immanence.

§ II (iii)

(a) *Causality and its Place in Ibnul 'Arabí's System*

Causality as generally understood has no place in a pantheistic system like that of Ibnul 'Arabí. The universe, as a whole, according to him, is the product of God's spontaneous, yet necessary activity of *Self-realisation* or *Self-manifestation*. Cause and effect are only two aspects of that

¹ Hence the term *Huwwiyah* which Ibnul 'Arabí uses as synonymous with *Dbār*, Essence. See *Fut.* II, p. 764: sometimes the term *huwwiyah* is used for the essence of a particular being. This is a finite mode of the Absolute *Huwwiyah*.

eternal process of Self-revelation of Reality regarded now internally (as *Ḥaqq*) now externally (as *Khalq*). "The movement of the creation of the world," Ibnul 'Arabí says, i.e. the fact that the world came into existence from non-existence, is an intelligible one—*ḥarakah ma'qūlah*.¹ He himself remarks that "cause" and effect are mere words—*'ibaratān*—two *subjective* categories, but this does not prevent him from saying "that the 'cause' (in this particular sense) in all respects and under all conditions and in every state (*ḥaḍrah*) is God, and the effect in every respect and under all conditions and in every state is the Phenomenal World",² because *logically*, God and the Phenomenal World, if we must speak of two, stand in causal relation to one another. It is just to be in the fashion that Ibnul 'Arabí drags in the question of causality at all. In effect he denies it as we shall see later.

We must distinguish two fundamentally different ways of regarding the question of causality:

- (i) Causality as applied to the universe *as a whole*, i.e. the question whether the universe *as a whole* is caused and if so what is the cause?
- (ii) Causality as applied to some parts *in* the universe, i.e. the causal connection between the various parts of the universe as we usually know it, i.e. the question of causality as applied to the universe as an organic whole, some parts in which stand in a definite causal relation to others.

Ibnul 'Arabí has no objection to the latter kind of causality although he regards it, like multiplicity itself, as merely relative and apparent. Phenomenal objects, so far as we understand them, seem to stand in causal relations to one another—but it is an immanent not a transient causality.³ It is causality in which the cause and the effect belong to one and the same continuant, the divine Essence, although we

¹ *Fus.* p. 450.

² *Fus.* p. 362.

³ The terms are borrowed from Dr W. E. Johnson; see his *Logic*, III, pp. 128 foll.

attribute the cause to one aspect of this continuant (the divine aspect, the *Lāhūt*) and the effect to the other aspect of the same continuant—the *Nāsūt*. It is always the divine that controls and has effect on the phenomenal—But what are the divine and the phenomenal except the One Reality? All that Ibnul ‘Arabí is anxious to do is *not to admit* the reality of *particular* causes in the Phenomenal World, for such admission would commit him to polytheism.¹

If this is the case, and if there is only one Reality regarded in one aspect as a cause and in another as an effect, cause and effect are identical and every cause is an effect of its own effect, a judgment which Ibnul ‘Arabí says would be pronounced impossible by the unaided intellect, but which, according to the mystic intuition is an explanation of what actually is. The question is understood by the mystic as follows: Every cause (so-called) on account of its being both an *essence* and a *form* (for the two cannot be separated), is both a cause and an effect, an agent and a patient, and every effect (so-called) on account of its being an essence and a form, is also both a cause and an effect or an agent and a patient. And since Reality is One, now regarded as an Essence, now as a Form, it follows that it is both a cause and an effect at the same time, and that everything that is called a cause, on entering into a causal relation with anything else which is called an effect is at the same time an effect of its own effect, on account of that effect being (in virtue of its essence) a cause.² What it all amounts to is that God, who is the only cause, is immanent in both causes and effects, so it is immaterial whether we call a particular cause a cause of a certain effect or an effect of this effect (itself being regarded as a cause).

Ibnul ‘Arabí might have added that causality of this kind is reciprocal, i.e. that *cause-factors* are, in a sense, *determined* by effect-factors in one and the same continuant, and this is

¹ The Malāmites, he says, admit causes (particular causes) but do not rely upon them, for reliance upon particular causes is infidelity and polytheism. *Fut.* II, p. 21, l. 5.

² See *Fus.* p. 366.

another way of saying that a cause is, in a sense, an effect (not in the sense of being *produced* but rather *determined* by its effect) of its own effect.

The judgment of the intellect about the impossibility of a cause being an effect of its own effect would be right if we assume the impossibility of a plurality of causes. Then we cannot say that a cause is an effect of another cause since there is *no other*. But if the Cause and the Effect are one, and if we admit a plurality of particular "modes" of the one Cause, and a plurality of particular "modes" of the one Effect, we can assert, with no contradiction, that a particular cause is an effect of its own effect.

This notion of causation has an important bearing on all acts of "becoming", for according to Ibnul 'Arabí all changes in the Phenomenal World, in fact all that he calls creation, is nothing but "becoming", where activity and passivity of both essence and form run side by side. Causality of this kind implies:

- (i) the notion of temporal relations;
- (ii) the notion of change;
- (iii) mutual dependence between cause-factors and effect-factors, all of which are observed in the causal happenings of the Phenomenal World as we understand it.

(b) *The Cause of the World as a Whole*

What is the exact relation between God and the Universe, Ibnul 'Arabí asks? Is it a causal or a conditional relation? I.e. is God the cause (*'illah*) of the universe or just a condition (*shart*) for its existence?¹ Of course, he starts with the assumption that the universe, as we know it, is a contingent being (contingent as contrasted with necessary or self-subsistent) and as such stands in need of and depends for its

¹ The distinction between what Ibnul 'Arabí calls a cause (*'illah*) and a condition (*shart*) seems to be rather arbitrary. He defines a cause as that the existence of which necessarily entails the existence of something else, i.e. its effect, and a condition as that the existence of which does not necessarily entail the existence of something else, although the existence of the condition itself is necessary for the production of that which is conditioned.

existence on something other than itself—something necessary and self-subsistent; this being is God alone. Ibnul ‘Arabí denies that the relation between God and the universe is a conditional relation on the ground that a condition does not necessarily entail the existence of the thing of which it is a condition. For him, the existence of the universe is *necessarily entailed* by that of a necessary being. He argues that to be alive is a condition for being able to acquire knowledge and to have legs is a condition for being able to walk, but the existence of life does not necessarily entail that of knowledge, neither does the existence of legs necessarily entail walking. We can never say that the conditioned *must* exist, although we say that if it did, its *condition must* exist.¹

But unlike a condition, a cause, by itself, Ibnul ‘Arabí says, does entail the existence of its own effect. So, is the relation between God and the universe a causal one? Ibnul ‘Arabí seems to hold this view, but we shall see later in what way. His argument runs as follows. The universe, he says, is regarded by the Ash‘arites and the ancient philosophers as a necessary consequence of a certain cause. The Ash‘arites maintain that the existence of the universe is necessary on the ground that God, from eternity, has knowledge of it as it is, and since God’s knowledge is infallible, the universe must exist and in the way God knows it, otherwise God’s knowledge would be false, which is impossible. The philosophers, on the other hand, held that it is inherent in the nature of the Essence to manifest itself externally and that this alone makes the existence of the universe necessary. Ibnul ‘Arabí agrees with both, saying that we may say, following the Ash‘arites, that the divine knowledge of God, or the Essence, according to the philosophers, is the cause of the universe, if and only if this does not imply *any temporal* priority of God to the universe.² It would be meaningless, he says, to talk about a

¹ *Fut.* I, p. 341.

² Although Ibnul ‘Arabí himself often uses language which suggests such priority. See, e.g., *Fut.* I, p. 343.

temporal interval or a gap between the One and the Many, or God and the universe, or the Necessary and the Contingent, if necessity and contingency are regarded (as he regards them) as only two aspects of the One.¹ By this Ibnul 'Arabí means that if we must say that the universe is caused or created at all, it *must not* be understood in the sense of the universe being *originated* or created *in time* or from nothing, for Ibnul 'Arabí does not admit creation *ex nihilo*.²

He certainly agrees with the philosophers, to whom he certainly owes a great deal here, about the eternity of the world, although he differs from them in the way he explains it.³ He holds that the world was never at any time a non-existent and *then* became an existent. On the contrary, he holds that the universe is eternal, infinite and everlasting, because it is the outward expression of the eternal, infinite and everlasting One. What he calls the next world (*al ākhirah*) is a thing which is for ever in the making. He says: "the end of the world is something unrealisable; neither has the world any ultimate goal. The so-called next world is something for ever in the making."⁴ What people call this world and the next world are mere names for what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the ever new process of creation⁵ (*al khalq al jadid*) which is a continual process of annihilation and re-creation. When things (their forms) are annihilated, they are

¹ See *Fut.* I, p. 341.

² Like the Sincere Brethren (*Ikbwānus-Safā*) Ibnul 'Arabí means by creation (*khalq*) predestination (*taqdīr*) not origination (*ihdāth*). See *Epistles of the Sincere Brethren*, III, p. 109 and IV, p. 51. Cf. *Fut.* I, p. 316. Also cf. Ghazālī's *Al Madnūn as-Saghir* on the question of the pre-existence of Mohammed, where he uses the word *Khalq* to mean *taqdīr*.

³ The Ash'arite doctrine about the necessity of the existence of the universe, understood in a certain way, yields the same conclusion about the eternity of the world as that of the philosophers. The divine knowledge of God, the Ash'arites say, necessarily entails the existence of something known, which implies that the world as an object of God's knowledge is as eternal as God Himself. This is the view Ibnul 'Arabí sometimes takes of the eternity of the world, but much more thorough is his view about the eternity of the *Essence* which he attributes to the philosophers.

⁴ *Fut.* I, p. 338.

⁵ He often quotes the Qur'ānic verse: "But they are in doubt concerning a new creation", Qur'ān, I, 14.

"transferred" to the next world.¹ When they appear in a different form they come into this world (Visible World). The moment during which one form disappears is simultaneous with that during which another form takes its place and so on *ad infinitum*. There is never an interval *in Time*, and there has never been a process of creation other than this. We cannot possibly say that anything was not, *then* (*thumma*) was. "Then", (*thumma*), he says, does not mean an interval of time, but it indicates the *logical* priority of the cause to its effect.² It is curious that Ibn Rushd, Ibnul 'Arabí's contemporary and fellow-countryman, understands this problem of creation in a remarkably similar way. He also explains creation as "renewed existence every instant in a constantly changing world always taking its new form from the preceding".³ But Ibnul 'Arabí is the more profound thinker of the two. Ibn Rushd asserts the eternity of *two* beings—God and the universe. God is eternal *without* an agent or a cause: the universe is eternal *with* an agent and a cause; while, for Ibnul 'Arabí, there is only one eternal being which he calls now God, now the universe. The distinction he draws between what he calls the contingent and the necessary is but a formal one. In reality the contingent and the necessary are one. The contingent is nothing but the necessary *plus* a non-existent relation (i.e. a subjective relation) on account of which we invest it with a particular name. The universe as a whole is but one big contingent being in this sense.⁴ Neither the universe nor anything in it has an acquired existence (*istafād al wujūd*) in the sense that it was created from nothing. Acquired existence is a mental fiction. What things acquire are the *ahkām* (predications) of external existence.⁵ Ibnul 'Arabí expresses the same idea in a slightly different way by saying that everything

¹ The so-called "unseen world", which is no other than this.

² *Fur.* p. 300.

³ *Hasting's Encyc. of Religion and Ethics*, II, p. 263.

⁴ Cf *Fur.* pp. 100, 101, 109, 110, 118, etc., etc., all bearing on the same subject and expressing it in different ways.

See *Fur.* II, pp. 637-8.

is an eternal existent in its *thubût* (state of latency), and a temporal existence in its *ẓuhûr* (appearance in the external world).¹ He goes on to say that in saying that an object is *created* or *caused* to exist we mean no more than what we mean when we say that "a man has appeared in our house to-day (*hadatha 'indana 'l yawma insānun*), which does not imply that he had no previous existence before coming to our house".² Ibnul 'Arabî puts it all very boldly in an interesting passage in the *Fuṣûṣ* when he says that God *does not create* anything: creation (*takwin*) (which, according to him, means the coming into *concrete* manifestation of an already existing substance)—belongs to the thing itself. "It comes to being" means that it manifests itself of its own accord. The only thing that God does in the matter is to *will* a thing to *be* (concretely manifested), and God wills nothing and commands nothing the existence of which is not made necessary by the very nature and laws of *things themselves*.³ God according to him is another name for such laws. "Were it not in the nature of a thing *to be* at the moment of God's command, it would never be. So, nothing brings a thing into existence, i.e. makes its existence manifest, except itself."⁴

It is abundantly clear now what Ibnul 'Arabî means by the creation and causation of the world, but to complete his logical rather than ontological scheme of causality, he explains it in terms of two triads which correspond to one another, the one expressing one aspect of Reality (God), the other, the other aspect (the Phenomenal World). The first triad stands for God as a Trinity of *Essence—Will and Word* (speech); the second stands for the Phenomenal World which is also a Trinity of *essences* characterised by *obedience* and

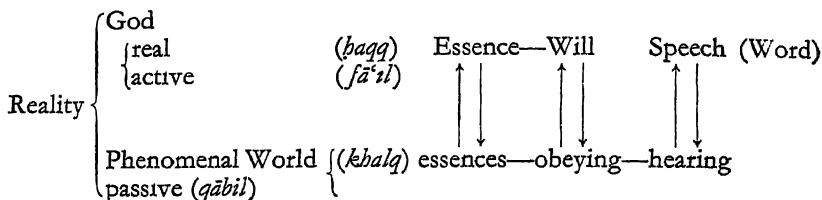
¹ By saying that a thing is eternal in its state of latency, i.e. as a potentiality he means either that the *essence* of a thing or the *idea* (as existing in the mind of God) is eternal, but in either case it is *not* the thing that is eternal. Only rhetorically (not philosophically) can we say that a thing as a potentiality is identical with itself as an actuality.

² *Fus.* pp. 421-2.

³ *Fus.* pp. 205-6.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 206.

hearing. This logical causal relation may be illustrated as follows:



In this sense and this sense only does Ibnul 'Arabí regard the universe as created or caused—just as it is in this sense that he calls it eternal. But there remains one fundamental point, and this is that he denies the eternity of the world in one definite sense, i.e. in the sense that it is co-eternal with God in the form in which we know it.¹ What is co-eternal with God, or what is God Himself, is the essence of the world, not the form. He says: "God predestines things in eternity but does not bring them into existence (i.e. in eternity), or what is the sense in calling Him a creator if the created things are co-eternal with Him?" In this sense, he calls the universe *ḥādith* (originated) and contingent and not-being, and he adds that it always is and always will be. But as we have already seen, he reduces the role of the creator to nothing.

It is idle, he concludes, to ask *when* the world was created. "*When*" refers to Time, and Time has always been regarded by Moslem thinkers as a product of the Phenomenal World itself. There is no *temporal* succession between creator and created, but there is a *logical* order of "before" and "after", not in Time! Ibnul 'Arabí adds that the relation between God and the universe is analogous to that of yesterday to to-day. "We cannot say that yesterday precedes to-day *in Time*, since it is Time itself. The non-existence of the world was never at any time."²

¹ See *Fut.* I, p. 500, and p. 379, on time and eternity, and p. 340 on meaning of causality and creation of the world.

² See *K. Seb.* ed. by Nyberg, pp. 15-16. Cf. Plotinus, who says "there was never a *time* where this whole was not": *Neo-Platonists*, p. 73.

(c) *Causality of the Divine Names*

Sometimes Ibnul 'Arabí calls the divine Names the causes of the universe in a somewhat similar way to that in which the Ash'arites call the divine Knowledge the cause of creation.¹ But he is more like Spinoza on this point. He regards the divine Names as lines of force in the way in which Spinoza regards the "Infinite Attributes".² As Names of the Godhead, they demand, by their very nature, their logical correlatives which can only be found in an outward expression or manifestation in the external world.³ The knower, e.g., demands something known—the Creator something created and so on. Besides this, Ibnul 'Arabí speaks of them as being instrumental causes which God uses in all the creative activities in the world.⁴ Our knowledge⁵ of the divine Names, he says, and of their hierarchical order, their classification into principal and subordinate, is the clue to our knowledge of the categories manifested in the spiritual and the physical worlds. In everything, no matter how complex it is, every aspect (*wajh*) and every "reality" (*haqiqah*)⁶ corresponds and owes its very existence to a divine Name which is to this "aspect" or "reality" like a prototype. This is just repeating, in a different way, what he says about the Phenomenal World being

¹ Call it either the divine Names or the Godhead (*al Uláhiyyah*), as Ibnul 'Arabí sometimes calls it. He says: "And that which is directed to create all that is 'other than God', i.e. the universe, is the Godhead with all its determinations (*ahkām*) and its relations (*nisab*)."
Fut. I, p. 51. Cf. *Fut.* I, p. 129.

² The greatest line of force is the Name Allah or the Merciful (Allah = Merciful). The rest of the Names are subordinate lines of force. The greatest causative or creative Name is the Merciful (Merciful = Bestower of being) and there are as many directions in which divine Mercy manifests its activity as there are Names. *Fus.* p. 354.

³ *Fut.* I, pp. 128, 421.

⁴ See *Fut.* II, pp. 523-5, where each divine Name is directed to create something in the world.

⁵ Knowledge that is only revealed to the mystics is what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the divine *Ḥadras* wherein God presents Himself to the heart of the mystic. See *Fut.* IV, pp. 250-421.

⁶ By *haqiqah* he seems to mean something like a category, e.g. humanity. See *Fut.* I, p. 129, l. 17. Cf. *Fut.* II, p. 395, foot of page.

the attributes with which God is described. But Ibnul 'Arabî does not invariably call the divine Names the causes of the world. In the *Futûḥāt* he sometimes calls them only conditions (in his sense of the term) and even goes so far as to say that "God was while the world was not, and He was named by all the divine Names",¹ a statement, which, if taken literally, would contradict his whole pantheistic system. We must, therefore, take him to mean that God was (not at any point of time) while the world was not (i.e. in form) and God was only *potentially* described by all the divine Names.

It is obvious here, as everywhere else where Ibnul 'Arabî shows inconsistent thinking, that the cause of it is his persistent effort to reconcile his pantheistic doctrine with the orthodox Moslem conception of Allah, and finding it an impossibility he indulges in metaphysical paradoxes and contradictions. In one breath he says that we are the attributes and Names with which God is described and that we know God, therefore we "make" Him God—i.e. that His Names have no meaning without the Phenomenal World, etc., etc., and, in another, that God existed and was described by all His divine Names before and independently of the Phenomenal World.

§ III (i)

(a) *Essence—Attributes and Names*

The divine Essence is the One Universal Substance referred to in the two preceding sections and identified with Absolute Reality. A divine Name is the divine Essence in one or other of its infinite aspects: it is a limited and a determinate "form" of the divine Essence. An Attribute is a divine Name manifested in the external world; it is what Ibnul 'Arabî calls a "theatre of manifestation" (*majlā*) or (*maẓḥar*),

¹ *Fut.* I, p. 343.

a field of operation¹ for the divine Substance to manifest itself in different degrees (*marātib*).

In its absolute indeterminateness, the divine Essence is a bare monad, void of all qualities and relations; it is the most indeterminate of all indeterminates (*ankar al nakirāt*)², the "Thing in itself" (*al shay*) as Ibnul 'Arabī sometimes calls it.³ It is indestructible, independent and unchangeable.⁴ It is not a substance, but *the One Substance* which, in itself, embraces all substances, so-called material and non-material. What is fleeting, destructible and changeable are the "accidents", the "forms", the manifestations.

There seems to be no doubt that Ibnul 'Arabī's theory on this point is based on the atomistic metaphysics of the Ash'arites, but he goes far beyond them in identifying their universal substance with God Himself. He differs from them on the doctrine of Attributes which they regard as subsisting *in* and co-eternal with God, yet neither identical with Him, as the Mu'tazilites say, nor different from Him. He has more in common with the Mu'tazilites here. The Attributes, according to him, have no existent *a'yān*, neither do they subsist (as entities) in, or have any meaning apart from, the divine Essence; they are mere relations, and if Ibnul 'Arabī sometimes speaks of the *a'yān* of Names or Attributes, it is only in a metaphorical sense, not in the sense that they are anything superadded to the Essence. In one sense they are very much like Plato's Intelligible Ideas: in themselves they are no external realities, but they determine (and in a sense, are determined by, Ibnul 'Arabī would add) particular existents in the external world.⁵ Knowledge and Life, e.g., are universal concepts determining and determined by particular beings which are called knowing and living, and they are at

¹ Such terms as "theatre" and "field", etc. should not be taken in any material sense.

² *Fuṣṣ.* p. 375.

³ "Were it customary to call Him the Thing we would have called Him the Thing so that this would have been the first of the Names." *Fuṣṣ.* II, p. 74.

⁴ See *Fuṣṣ.* p. 366 and cf. *Fuṣṣ.* II, p. 275.

⁵ See *Fuṣṣ.* pp. 24, 352.

the same time divine Attributes which are identical with and in no sense different from God. Thus Ibnul 'Arabí confuses the "Ideal Limits" of Plato with the divine Attributes of the Scholastics, and the two are ultimately irreconcilable.

As forms and particularisations of the divine Essence, the divine Names are a multiplicity,¹ each possessing unique characteristics in virtue of which it is distinguishable from the other, but essentially they are identical with the One Essence, and with one another.²

(b) *Reality in Relation to our Knowledge*

Reality, which is ultimately one and indivisible on Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine, seems to be regarded from three different points of view *in relation to our knowledge*:

- (i) Reality as we know it, i.e. Reality as manifested in the external world. As such, it is subject to the limitations of our senses and intellects. We know it as a multiplicity of existents, and we assert of it relations of all kinds, causal or otherwise. This he calls the Phenomenal World, "Appearance" and "Not-Being",³ etc. But though an apparent multiplicity, the Phenomenal World is an essential unity, each part of which is the Whole and capable of manifesting all the realities of the Whole.⁴
- (ii) Reality such as we do not directly *know* or perceive, except by mystical intuition, but whose existence we logically infer (following our reason).

Of this, he maintains, we predicate attributes characteristic only of a Necessary Being, and Ibnul 'Arabí chooses to call it God in a theistic sense—God as "created in our beliefs" (*al*

¹ See *Fus.* p. 151. He calls this the "imagined God" (*al haqq al mutakbayyal*), *Fus.* p. 178.

² See *Fus.* pp. 59–60, 355. In the second reference Ibnul 'Arabí quotes Ibn Qasí to whom he attributes this view of the identity of each of the divine Names with all the Names.

³ It comes very near to Plotinus' Matter. See *Enn.* III, 6, 7.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 295.

ḥaqq al makhlūq fi-l i'tiqād).¹ This is only a fictitious and a subjective God and our conception of Him varies according to different individuals and communities, but according to Ibnul 'Arabī any conception which deprives God of His absoluteness and universality or renders His unity in any way incomplete by admitting the reality of any other deity or even of the Phenomenal World, is polytheistic. A complete conception of God, therefore, is one which comprises the two aspects of Reality (immanence and transcendence), i.e. of God as being both *in* yet *above* the universe. This is the starting-point in Ibnul 'Arabī's Philosophy of Religion as we shall see later.

We are forced to do this, he goes on to say, because the attributes we predicate of the Phenomenal World *demand* their logical correlatives; contingency demands necessity, relativity demands absoluteness, finitude demands infinity and so on.² These logical correlatives can only be applied to a Reality thus conceived. "The key to the mystery of 'Lordship' is thou" (the Phenomenal).³ The fundamental difference between Reality as conceived in (i) and in (ii) is that in (i) the transcendental Attributes of God, i.e. (*ṣifāt al tanẓīh*), which are the logical correlatives of the immanent Attributes (*ṣifāt al tashbīh*), have no application. Attributes which express any relation between God and the universe (in the orthodox sense) are explained away by Ibnul 'Arabī; so we are really left with only two types of Attributes: transcendent, which are characteristic of God, and immanent, which are characteristic of the Phenomenal World: each type explaining an aspect of Reality. We must not, therefore, predicate of God such attributes as "green" or "circular" or "hearing" or "seeing", etc., although His Essence is the essence of all that is green, circular and all that hears and sees.

¹ *Fus.* p. 352.

² *Fus.* p. 212.

³ *Fus.* p. 146. Ibnul 'Arabī attributes this saying to Tustarī. This is one way of understanding the alleged Prophetic Tradition: "He who knoweth himself knoweth his Lord."

This is only to mark out the Godhead from the Phenomenal World as two *subjective* aspects.

What Ibnul 'Arabî means by saying that "we ourselves (including the Phenomenal World) are the Attributes with which we describe God"¹ and "there is not a single Name or Attribute with which He is characterised, the meaning or the spirit of which is not found in the Phenomenal World",² is on the one hand, that the Phenomenal World possesses unique characteristics which explain God's immanent side, and on the other, that through these characteristics we are *formally* led to ascribe to Him Attributes which explain His transcendent side. But regarding Reality as the Essence of All, all attributes whatever, transcendent and immanent, may be predicated of it. Ibnul 'Arabî says: "He, be He exalted, is (actually) named by all the names of the objects of the Phenomenal World";³ "Glory to Him who is 'meant' by all the attributes of the Godhead and created objects",⁴ "Our names are His Names";⁵ "He is called Abû Sa'id al Kharrâz", etc., etc.⁶

- (iii) Reality such as we do not directly know or perceive, but which, following our reason, we logically infer as we infer the existence of a substance when we perceive its accidents.

This is the divine Essence of which we can predicate nothing except bare existence. It is unknowable and incommunicable when regarded in abstraction and apart from any relation or limitation whatever. It is ultimately indefinable and, like a substance, it can only be *described* in terms of its "States" which, in this case, are the Phenomenal World.⁷ Its nature

¹ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 27.

³ *Fuṣṣ.* iv, p. 251, l. 3. Cf. *Fuṣṣ.* pp. 111-12.

⁵ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 182.

² *Fuṣṣ.* p. 400.

⁴ *Fuṣṣ.* iii, p. 186.

⁶ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 102.

⁷ *Fuṣṣ.* pp. 414-15. Moses' answer to Pharaoh's question "What is the Lord of the Worlds?" is interpreted by Ibnul 'Arabî as meaning the Lord whose being is manifested in the heavens and the earth (spiritual and material world) and what lies between them. The actual answer of Moses was "He is the Lord of the heaven and the earth".

admits of no opposition or contradiction (*ḍidd*) or comparison (*mithl*), yet it unites in itself all opposites and similars. It has no qualities or quantities, yet it is the source of all qualities and quantities. It is generally referred to by such vague terms as "Pure Light" (as the Ishrāqīs call it) or "Pure Good" or the "Blindness" (*al 'amā*).

This is the state of unity (*aḥadiyyah*) which admits of no plurality whatever, the unity which is the sum total of all potentialities (*fa-aḥadiyyatuhu majmū'u kullihī bi-l quwwah*).¹ As such, it is not an object of worship.² The object of worship is the Lord (*al Rabb*) not the One (*al Aḥad*).³ But such unity becomes intelligible once we admit the other aspect, i.e. multiplicity, for, in itself, it transcends all multiplicity. It belongs exclusively to the Blindness from which it can never be emancipated. It is the state of the "One to whom belong the burning splendours" (*al subḥāt al muḥriqah*),⁴ the One, i.e. the manifestation of whom would cause all the multiplicity of Phenomena to vanish, so that nothing would remain except the Real. "Do not hope, O my friend", he says, "that the veil of the unity will ever be removed; limit your hope, therefore, to the attainment of (knowledge) of the Oneness (*al wāḥidiyyah*), i.e. the unity of the divine Names",⁵ i.e. Reality as explained in (ii). According to him absolute agnosticism and gnosticism meet where the *essential* unity is concerned. "No one knows God as He really is (i.e. His Essence) except God",⁶ not even a mystic, for a mystic belongs to the multiplicity. This important triad forms the nucleus of Ibnul 'Arabī's whole metaphysical system. God as a *personality* existing *apart from*, or in any

¹ *Fuṣ*. p. 145.

² *Fuṣ*. p. 118.

³ *Fut*. II, pp. 766-7, l. 2 from foot.

⁴ *Fut*. II, p. 468, and *Fut*. III, p. 551.

⁵ *Kutāb al Alif* by Ibnul 'Arabī. MS. Loth 658, IV, fol. 57. Ibnul 'Arabī distinguishes between unity of the Whole (*aḥadiyyat al majmū'*) and unity of the One (*aḥadiyyat al wāḥid*); the one is the essential unity, the other is the Godhead. *Fut*. II, p. 578.

⁶ *Fuṣ*. p. 32.

sense other than the universe, yet controlling it and directing its movements, has no place in his system. He says:

O Thou who hast created all things in Thyself,

Thou unitest that which Thou createst.

Thou createst that which exists infinitely

In Thee, and Thou art the Narrow (Limited: *ad-Dayyiq*), and all-Embracing: (*al Wāsi'*).

God as an object of belief is, he urges, a mere concept which we derive from our knowledge of ourselves: the positive Attributes we ascribe to Him are based on our positive attributes, and the negative on the negative. "We know Him (i.e. through our knowledge of ourselves) so we create Him";² "He describes Himself to us by us";³ and as such "God is but a mere phrase".⁴

In place of the Ethical God of Islam we find, in Ibnul 'Arabī's system, a God who, while regarded as identical with the universe, is a principle which controls and animates the universe. This is Ibnul 'Arabī's strong point: his weakness, like that of Hegel, lies in reducing this active aspect of God (or the Absolute, as Hegel would say) into a mere nominal or rather *logical relation*. He maintains that any attribute we predicate of God belongs to Him only in virtue of *His rank* as God (*bi-l martaba* or *bi-l daraja*).⁵ It is only the conclusion of a formal dialectic. God does not actually create, but creating belongs to His rank: in reality the creator and the created are one. The same may be said of Omniscience and the rest of the attributes which express any relation between Him and the universe.

Ibnul 'Arabī is well aware of the grave inconsistency of holding a notion of an Ethical God side by side with a pantheistic One. At the same time he is eager to preserve in his writings an apparent picture of the Personal God of Islam—a merely verbal mask behind which his pantheistic God can be easily detected. This deliberate attempt to dis-

¹ *Fus.* p. 139.

² *Fus.* p. 125.

³ *Fus.* p. 28.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 360.

⁵ *Fus.* p. 386.

guise his ideas in this way is nowhere in his whole system more apparent than in his ingenious manner of explaining away that class of attributes which form the conception of the Ethical God of Islam.

(c) *How Ibnul 'Arabī explains away the Ethical and Personal Names and Attributes of God*

Two main methods are employed by him to attain this end: (i) the reduction of all Names and Attributes to mere subjective relations; regarding them as logical and psychological rather than actual, as has been already explained; (ii) by means of a philological interpretation of terms which often renders them meaningless or completely alters their usual signification. If an attribute, literally understood, fits in well with his pantheistic scheme, Ibnul 'Arabī usually leaves it at that: if it does not, he interprets it. The two methods of interpretation, just referred to, are admirably used in his enormous chapter on the divine Name and Attributes in his *Futūḥāt*.¹ Here he identifies the divine Names with what he calls the *Ḥaḍarāt* (divine Presences), using the term *Ḥaḍarāt* in a different sense from that in which it is used in connection with the Five Divine *Ḥaḍras* (Five Planes of Being). The former method of interpretation is suggested by this term, since by a *Ḥaḍra* here he means a mystic state in which God presents Himself to the heart of the mystic in the form of a divine Name revealed in its absolute abstraction. He enumerates only some of these *Ḥaḍras* (or Names), for according to him they are infinite in number. The "Presence of the Godhead" (*al ḥaḍratu-l ilāhiyyah*), e.g., is the state in which God is revealed as Allah; the "Presence of the Merciful" is that in which He is revealed in the Name of the Merciful and so on. This particular way of interpreting the divine Names, and the technical terms Ibnul 'Arabī uses on this subject are, so far as I know, entirely his own.

¹ *Fut.* iv, pp. 250-421.

Each *Ḥadra* reveals the twofold implication of a divine Name: its immanent aspect, i.e. its reference to the special point of view from which God is regarded—and its transcendent aspect, i.e. its reference to the divine Essence. The philological method, on the other hand, is an attempt to alter the *form* of the Names themselves. The following examples will suffice to illustrate what I mean:

(1) The divine Name *al Mu'min* (the Giver of peace) which Ibnul 'Arabī explains as coming from *amān* (peace). The "*Ḥadra* of the Giver of peace" (*ḥaḍratu-l Mu'min*) becomes completely changed into the "Presence of Peace", wherein the soul ceases to be troubled by reflective thinking on the nature of God,¹ i.e. it becomes identified with the state of mystic intuition.

(2) The Name *al Jabbār* (the All-Compeller) which he interprets as the One by whom everything is "compelled" to proceed: *compulsion* (*Jabr*) is understood by him as equivalent to *necessity* (*wujūb*). "This is the underlying principle of all creation. There is even compulsion in choice."² But compulsion is not an *external* force on his view: things obey *their own inner* laws of necessity which are the laws of the One.

(3) The Name *al Mutakabbir* (the Proud) is interpreted by him to mean the One who is so great that He transcends all contingent attributes, i.e. Proud = transcendent (in his sense).

(4) The Name *al Ghaffār* (the Pardoner) which he derives from *ghafara* to cover or veil. *Al Ghaffār* therefore means the One who veils Himself in "forms" of Names: the greatest veil (or form) being the Name *aṣ-Ṣāḥir* (the External).³

(5) The Name *al 'Adl* (the Just One) which he derives from *'adala* to incline towards one thing rather than another, and God is *al 'Adl*, he says, because He has "inclined" from the State of essential necessity (*ḥaḍratu-l wujūb al dhātī*) to that of phenomenal necessity (*ḥaḍratu-l wujūb bi-l ghayr*), i.e. that He has inclined to be manifested in the external world.⁴

¹ *Fut.* iv, p. 260.

³ *Fut.* iv, pp. 273-4.

² *Fut.* iv, p. 265.

⁴ *Fut.* iv, p. 302.

Ibnul 'Arabí explains Will (*irādah*) in a similar way. It is the inclination of the divine Essence to manifest itself. The Essence unmanifested is in a state of *i'tidāl* (equilibrium), but as manifested it is in a state of *'adl* thus explained.

(6) The Name *al latīf* (the Subtle—the Benevolent—the most Pleasant) which Ibnul 'Arabí understands as the Subtle *Substance* and almost explains in a materialistic sense.¹ "God is 'subtle' only as a *Substance*, whereas in manifestation He is most obvious. No eye falls except on Him or sees except through Him. From whom is He concealed?—and there is naught besides Him."² Ibnul 'Arabí takes all the Qur'ānic passages and Prophetic Traditions that admit of pantheistic interpretation to support his view of the immanence of the divine Essence in all beings.³

(7) The Name *al Ḥafīẓ* (the All-Preserving One) which Ibnul 'Arabí interprets as the maintainer of all existence in the sense of being the One who subsists in all and preserves all as their Essence.⁴

(8) The Name *al Muqīt* (the Provider) which Ibnul 'Arabí interprets as the One who feeds the whole with His being.⁵

(9) The Name *al Raqīb* (the Watchful) which he interprets as the One who watches everything because He is the Essence of everything.⁶

(10) The Hearing One (*al Samī'*). This Name is often explained by Ibnul 'Arabí in relation to the Name the Knowing One (*al 'Ālim*) as the One who has revealed Himself to Himself in a form of self-consciousness. He "hears", according to Ibnul 'Arabí, means that He "responds" to the

¹ See *Fus.* p. 376.

² *Fut.* iv, p. 304.

³ Like "Whoso obeys the Prophet, he has obeyed God", Qur. iv, 82, and "Thou didst not throw, but God threw", Qur. viii, 17, and so on.

⁴ See his interpretation of "Sailing on beneath our eyes", Qur. lrv, 14; *Fut.* iv, p. 317. Cf. *Fus.* p. 194.

⁵ *Fut.* iv, pp. 319-20. Cf. *Fus.* pp. 117, 123, 194, etc.

⁶ *Fut.* iv, p. 326. Cf. *Fus.* p. 285, where he explains the Names *Shahīd* and *Raqīb*. He usually quotes such Qur'ānic passages as "And He (God) is with you wherever you are", etc., to bear on this subject.

inner call of the "essential speech" (*al kalām al dhātī*) of the realities of things in their state of latency. The whole thing is expressed metaphorically, and in this connection Ṣūfīs are fond of quoting the Qur'ānic passage alluding to what they call the Divine Covenant. When God revealed Himself to the latent realities of things, then existing only in His knowledge (but Ibnul 'Arabī would say in His Essence), He addressed Himself to them thus: "Am I not your Lord? and they responded 'yea'."¹ Both Ḥallāj and Ibnul 'Arabī hold that the Speaker and the Hearer in this verse were God Himself, but while Ḥallāj denies the potential multiplicity in the One, Ibnul 'Arabī admits it, saying that it was to this that God addressed Himself, i.e. that the One addressed Himself in the sense of "revealed Himself to Himself in the intelligible forms of the Many".² Upon this text he bases his view of the *a'yān al thābita*, as we shall see later.

(11) The Name *al Muṣīb* (the Responding One), which is interpreted by Ibnul 'Arabī as the One who responds to the "call" of contingent beings in the sense in which a substance "responds" to the call of its "forms",³ i.e. it gives of itself to the forms just what the forms require—what their nature allows. Ibnul 'Arabī also adds fresh Names to the list of the popular divine Names: such as:

(12) The Name *al Dahr* (Time).⁴ By Time he means that whose existence is infinite (*mā lā yatanāhā wujūduhu*): it comprises eternity, everlastingness and what lies between them: it is identical, on his view, with the divine Essence. This seems to have a remarkable resemblance to the Plotinian view of Time which is "the image of eternity reflecting the infinite, already existent whole of being, by the continual

¹ Qur. vii, 171.

² Cf. *Q.T.R.A. Ḥallāj* by Massignon, p. 36. Ibnul 'Arabī explains "seeing" and "speaking" in a similar way.

³ *Fut.* iv, p. 328.

⁴ Ibnul 'Arabī quotes the Tradition of the Prophet, "Reville not Time, for verily God is Time", and the Qur'ānic verse, "Naught destroys us but Time", XLIV, 23.

going to infinity of successive realisations".¹ Time for Plotinus and Ibnul 'Arabí is an eternal "Now"—"That which guides the whole knows the future as Present."²

In a similar way Ibnul 'Arabí interprets the rest of the divine Names and Attributes, with one object, by which he is absolutely possessed, i.e. the conversion of Islamic principles and ideas into unflinching pantheism. The creative God of Islam no longer means the Creator, but the One who reveals Himself in the infinite forms of the universe: the Merciful no longer means the Merciful: Mercy is identical with "bestowal" of being, and so on.

Ethical and Personal Attributes have significance only where there is a *real* duality of God and universe, i.e. where there is something *other than* God, but Ibnul 'Arabí's system allows no "other". Yet, when he is moved by a religious feeling, as he sometimes is, the orthodox God of religion stands firm and clear before his mind, but this is his feeling, not his philosophy. Often, this orthodox God is a mere shadow and a dream.

Ibnul 'Arabí's main argument is that duality or plurality of any kind, be it duality of God and universe, or plurality of objects in the external world, or even of Attributes which we ascribe to God, is ultimately *subjective* and *relative*, but he often falls into the error against which he is always warning us, i.e. treating the subjective as objective. The duality of God and universe, which according to him is ultimately subjective, often figures in his writings as possessing far more concreteness and reality than he is ever willing to admit. Attributes which are mere subjective relations are often hypostatized, but this is Ibnul 'Arabí's poetical tendency rather than his metaphysical theory. He is not a pure philosopher, and therefore strict logical consistency should not be expected from him. His God cannot be described as purely pantheistic or purely theistic or purely Neoplatonic,

¹ Whittaker's *Neo-Platonists*, p. 75: *Enn.* III, 7, II.

² *Enn.* IV, 4, 12.

but a mixture of the three and a mixture of the highest fantastic type.

(d) *The Two Aspects of the Divine Names*

The only distinction Ibnul 'Arabí makes between the One and the Many or God and the Phenomenal World, which has already been explained, is expressed in a different way by what he calls the two aspects of the divine Names. Regarded as a unity and as essentially one with the divine Essence, the Names are said to be "*active*" in the sense that each Name indicates one or other of the infinite lines of activity of the One. As a multiplicity manifested in the external world, i.e. regarded as the external world itself (for the external world is nothing other than the divine Names) they are "*passive*" and receptive. The former aspect he calls *al taḥaqquq* (the point of view of the Real), the latter *al takhalluq* (the point of view of the Created) and the relation between the two, through which actual manifestation is effected, is called *ta'alluq*.¹

The divine Names are also active when considered in relation to the *a'yān al thābita*, for these are nothing but the Phenomenal World in latency, and, in their turn, the *a'yān al thābita* are active in relation to the external world. It is all a hierarchy of higher and lower, the higher is active in relation to the lower and passive in relation to the one higher than itself.

But with Ibnul 'Arabí we are always moving in a closed circle of thought. Having taken pains to explain his own metaphysical doctrine of the One and the Many, he regards it all as a mere subjectivity. From whatever point we start on this circle we always come back to where we started, and nothing more is gained than the bare assertion that there is but One Reality, which however much you multiply it (in

¹ *Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al Ḥusnā*, MS. Loth Cat. 658, fols. 1-22, where Ibnul 'Arabí explains the two aspects of the divine Names and the relation between them.

thought) or try to conceive it, now as a multiplicity of existents, now as One Essence characterised by innumerable Attributes and Names, remains in itself ultimately inconceivable and unalterable. All our knowledge of it is subjective and vain. There is no multiplicity, not even of Attributes or Names—no passivity or activity. These are terms which we ourselves have coined and found convenient to use for expressing what we choose to understand by Reality.

§ III (11)

(a) *The Fixed Prototypes or the Latent Realities* (*al a'yān al thābīta*)

So far as I know, Ibnul 'Arabī was the first to use the term *a'yān thābīta*, which may be rendered "fixed prototypes" or "latent realities of things", in a more or less determined sense, and to give it a prominent place in a metaphysical system. His theory of the *a'yān al thābīta* is a curious mixture of the Platonic theory of "Ideas", the Ishrāqī doctrine of "intelligible existence" (*al wujūd al dhibnī*), and the Scholastic doctrine of the identification of substance and attributes. Before coming into concrete existence, Ibnul 'Arabī says, things of the Phenomenal World were in a state of potentiality in the divine Essence of God, and were, as ideas of His future "becoming", the content of His eternal knowledge, which is identical with His knowledge of Himself. God revealed Himself to Himself in a state of self-consciousness (not at any point of time) in what Ibnul 'Arabī calls God's First Epiphany or Particularisation (*al ta'ayyun al awwal*) in which He saw in Himself and for Himself an infinity of these *a'yān* as determinate "forms" of His own Essence, forms which reflected and in every detail corresponded to His own eternal ideas of them. These "forms" are what Ibnul 'Arabī calls the *a'yān al thābīta*. We may therefore define them as the latent states, both *in the Mind* and *in the Essence* of God, of His

future "becoming", states which can only be expressed in terms of the divine Names and all the possible relations which hold between them. The two-fold nature of these *a'yān*, i.e. their being *intelligible ideas* or concepts in the Mind of God, on the one hand, and *particular "modes"* of the divine Essence on the other, is explained by the fact that Ibnul 'Arabī and his school use the terms *māhiyyah* and *huwiyyah* as equivalent to the term *'ayn thābita*. The one (*māhiyyah*) explains the first aspect of the *'ayn*, i.e. its being *an idea* or a concept; the other (*huwiyyah*) the second aspect, i.e. its being an *essential "mode"*.

We can no more say that these *a'yān*, these potential "modes" of the Essence, are other than the Essence or can have any existence apart from it, than say that mental states of our own minds are other than our minds, or can have any separate existence apart from them, or indeed, the states of any other substance whatever. *Mentally*, however, we may *discriminate* between the Essence and the *a'yān* or the mind and its states, and *think* of them *as apart*. The *a'yān al thābita* are in reality one with the divine Essence and the divine Consciousness. Yet, as "states" or "modes", they are no more the divine Essence itself than our mental states are our minds. Ibnul 'Arabī calls them non-existent, not in the sense that they have no reality or being whatever, but in the sense that they have no *external* existence, or any existence *apart* from the Essence of which they are states.¹ There is only One Reality—and a non-existent subjective multiplicity and non-existent subjective relations which limit and determine the One. The *a'yān al thābita* are what Ibnul 'Arabī calls the logical correlatives (*muqtaḍayāt*) of the divine Names, but they are also potential *essences*. Do the *a'yān al thābita* ever *become* concrete manifestations or is there no sense of "becoming", since they are in one sense subjectivities and as such will always remain non-existent? Is Ibnul 'Arabī's view of them another poetic description like that of Plato of his

¹ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 101.

"Ideas", which personifies them and regards them as entities, while in reality such "archetypal ideas and their concretely manifested forms never stood apart and then were brought together by creative volition?"¹ I can do no better than quote in full an interesting passage from Ibnul 'Arabî's *Futûhât* to explain his own view on this subject. "Is that", Ibnul 'Arabî asks, "which we call existent and perceive by our senses the '*ʿayn al thābita* 'transferred' from a state of non-existence to a state of existence? Or is it only its *ḥukm* (subjective determination) brought into an intelligible relation with the '*ʿayn* of the Real Being (God)—as a mirror image is related to a mirror—the so-called thing (external object) itself being a non-existent as it always was in its state of latency? (If the latter is the case), the '*ʿyān* of contingent beings must perceive each other only in and through the '*ʿayn* of the mirror of the Real Being; the '*ʿyān al thābita* (these fixed prototypes) remaining as they always were in a state of non-existence. Or is it", he goes on to say, "that God manifests His being in (the forms of) these '*ʿyān*, which are to him like theatres, so that each '*ʿayn* perceives the other when God manifests Himself in this other, (a fact which is) usually described as a thing having acquired existence (*istafāda'l wujūd*) but which is nothing other than the manifestation or appearance of God in the form of that thing. This (second explanation) is nearer the truth in one respect; the other (explanation) is nearer the truth in another respect, but in both cases the '*ʿayn al thābita* of the thing in question is a non-existent (externally), and still remains in its state of latency (*thābitatun fī ḥaḍrat al thubūt*)."² All that Ibnul 'Arabî is eager to assert is the denial of the existence of the so-called '*ʿyān al thābita* in themselves, i.e. as objects which are independent of, and have separate being *apart from* the one universal Essence. As *potentialities*, and as intelligible ideas in the Mind of God, they certainly are mere subjectivities, but as *essences*, they are all that is, since they are the divine Essence itself as

¹ Cf. Whittaker's *Neo-Platonists*, p. 73.

² *Fut.* iv, pp. 269-70.

particularised or determined. Unfortunately Ibnul 'Arabī's language in describing these *a'yān* is so rhetorical and fantastic that he endows them with far more concreteness and independent existence than he was ever aware of. He also speaks about them as though they mark a *definite stage* in an evolutionary history of God, when he says that God revealed Himself to Himself in "the most holy emanation" (*al fayḍ al aqdas*) in the forms of these *a'yān*. Neither is it uncommon to find him using such phrases as God *was* and there was naught besides Him, *then*, He revealed Himself in the intelligible forms of the *a'yān al thābita*; or that God "clothed" the *a'yān al thābita* with existence (*albasa 'l a'yān al wujūd*); or that He caused them to appear; or that we *were* in God as beings (*akwān*) and as essences (*a'yān*);¹ or that "When God, glory to Him, willed, in respect of His most beautiful Names, to see the *a'yān* of things, or to see His own '*ayn*, etc., etc."² He also often uses terms which express temporal relations between God and the *a'yān al thābita* on the one hand, and the *a'yān al thābita* and the concrete objects in the external world on the other, such as "was", "will be", "becoming", "appears", etc., which terms, if understood in their literal sense, would be destructive to his whole philosophy. We must, therefore, be always on our guard in understanding such terms, and bear in mind the *general* drift of Ibnul 'Arabī's arguments; the *details* he gives us are often misleading. In this particular instance, he certainly does not wish to assert any real temporal relation between God and the *a'yān*, although his own language implies it. There is nothing against our holding that the "most holy emanation", with which we shall have to deal more fully later, is a continual process in the eternal drama of life—that it had no beginning and will never have an end—that potentialities in the One Essence are continually and unceasingly becoming actualities without any lapse in time, and that they will continue to do so for ever.

¹ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 274.

² *Fuṣṣ.* p. 12.

From what has already been said, it is obvious that Ibnul 'Arabí's *a'yān al thābita* though resembling Plato's "Ideas" are not absolutely identical with them. Their essential aspect, i.e. their being particular "modes" in the divine Essence *as well as* intelligible forms in the divine Consciousness, marks them out distinctly from the "Ideas" of Plato. The divine consciousness which Ibnul 'Arabí identifies with Plotinus' First Intellect embraces all the intelligible forms of the *a'yān*; the Essence, all their potential essences. The former, i.e. the intelligible forms, correspond to and reflect the latter, i.e. the essences. Ibnul 'Arabí often calls these essences spirits, and attributes to them functions and activities which it is impossible to ascribe to mere ideas. God becomes conscious of Himself through the First Intellect, the *Rūh* (the Spirit), but he becomes conscious of each of the *a'yān* (each spirit) through the essences of the *a'yān* themselves, i.e. through the spirits which are particular "modes" in the universal Spirit.¹ This seems to be the same as the view taken by Plotinus of the Mind of the One and its "Ideas". "Mind", he says, "is all things actually, for knowledge of things in their immaterial essence is the things themselves."² "The Mind (of the One) knows its objects, not like perception, as external, but as one with itself. This unity is not the highest; it involves the duality of thinking and being thought—it is the second in order."³ Ibnul 'Arabí's view about the identification of the knowledge of the One with the *a'yān* of things (the things themselves) is, as we have seen, substantially the same as that of Plotinus, but he is not so exact and so consistent on this point as his master: sometimes he seems to mean by the *a'yān al thābita* just the intelligible ideas pure and simple, and sometimes their bare essences, but seldom both, although this is what is implied by his general theory. He identifies the divine Knowledge

¹ *Fus.* p. 46. Cf. Chapter on the Logos.

² *Enn.* v, 4, 2. See Mackenna, iv, p. 47. Cf. *Enn.* v, 9, 5. See Mack. iv, 1, 93-4.

³ Whittaker's *Neo-Platonists*, p. 63.

with the divine Essence, from which it follows, as Plotinus says, that the divine Knowledge is identical with all the potential "modes" of the Essence (Plotinus' One), and that each "mode" must be identified with an idea of itself in the divine Consciousness. In other words, each "mode" must be at the same time a state in the Essence and a state in the divine Knowledge, and the two states coincide and are in reality one in what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the *'ayn al thābita*.

(b) *The Place of the "a'yān al thābita"*
in Ibnul 'Arabí's System

The *a'yān al thābita* occupy in Ibnul 'Arabí's metaphysical system an intermediary position between the One as the Absolute Reality and the Phenomenal World. He calls them the "keys of the Unseen" (*mafātīḥ al ghayb*)¹ and the "first keys" (*al mafātīḥ al uwal*), because, according to him, they were the opening chapter in the history of creation (although, strictly speaking, he believes that creation has no beginning or end), i.e. the revelation of the One to Himself as the Creator contemplating in Himself the infinity of His creatures (i.e. His future manifestations). This particular state is known only to God Himself. Not even revelation or mystical unveiling (*kashf*) can penetrate its mysteries, for it is the second highest state of unity where God is both the knower and the known. To say that a finite being can apprehend the Absolute and His states is a contradiction in terms. Not even in *fanā'* can such a state be known, for a complete *fanā'* which may render such knowledge possible is impossible in this world. But though the specific relation of the *a'yān al thābita* to the divine Essence, and how they are "related to the creative power of God"² and how they "become" external existents,

¹ *Fuṣ.* p. 248, reference to Qur'ān: "And He possesses the keys of the Unseen, etc.", Qur. vi, 59.

² *Fuṣ.* p. 249. Cf. p. 246, where Ibnul 'Arabí calls the same thing the mystery of predestination (*sirr-u-l qadar*). This, Ibnul 'Arabí says, is the reason why 'Uzayr (the Prophet Ezra) was rebuked by God when he asked the question: "How will God revive this after its death?" Qur. vi, 261.

are all impossible even for the most perfect mystic to know, Ibnul 'Arabí holds that it is not so impossible for a true mystic to obtain knowledge of the *a'yân al thābita* themselves, particularly his own *'ayn*. He says: "or it may be that God reveals to him (the mystic) his *'ayn al thābita* and its infinite succession of states, so that he knows himself in the same way as God knows him, having derived his knowledge from the same source (as God)."¹

In virtue of their unique position as an intermediary stage between the One and the Phenomenal World, the *a'yân al thābita* have, on Ibnul 'Arabí's view, the unique characteristic of being both active and passive (or "receptive"). Inasmuch as they are, in a sense, "emanations" from the One, and forms of the divine Names, and potential "modes" in the divine Essence, they are passive and receptive (*qābil*).² And in respect of their essences, i.e. in virtue of their possessing within themselves all the potentialities of becoming what the external existents of the Phenomenal World are, they are regarded as active. But activity and passivity here mean nothing more than *logical* determination (*hukm*). The *a'yân* are passive in relation to the divine Names, because of the *ahkām* (determinations) which the divine Names exercise over them, a state very much analogous to the determination by a universal of its particulars.³ They are active in relation to the phenomenal objects in the same sense as a potentiality is active in relation to the actuality it becomes, i.e. in both cases it is only logical determination.

¹ *Fus.* p. 47.

² *Fus.* p. 15: "The receptive (beings) come from nothing except His most holy emanation", by which he means the *a'yân al thābita*. Cf. *Fus.* p. 109, etc. This most holy emanation he also calls the Presence of Oneness, the Merciful Presence (*al ḥaḍratu-l raḥmāniyyah*): the First Epiphany (*al ta'ayyun al awwal*): the Presence of the Names (*ḥaḍratu-l asmā'*): the sphere of spirits (*'ālamu-l arwāḥ*), etc., etc.

³ Cf. *Fus.* p. 25.

§ IV

(a) *Ibnul 'Arabí's Pantheistic Doctrine*

Several hints have already been given, in different parts of this chapter, about the sort of doctrine Ibnul 'Arabí holds of the ultimate nature of Reality. The strictly logical aspect of it was dealt with in the first part, and it is the object of this section to give a more detailed account of its metaphysical aspect. Ibnul 'Arabí's theory of Reality is a pantheistic one. It is summed up in his own few words "glory be to God who created things, being Himself their essences (*a'yānuhā*)".¹ But what kind of pantheism is it?

There is a form of pantheism which, starting from the assumption that God is an absolute, infinite and eternal being, who is the source and ultimate ground of all that is, was, and will be, gradually assumes a form of acosmism according to which the Phenomenal World is but a passing shadow of the Reality which lies behind it. Everything that is finite and temporal is illusory and unreal. This form of pantheism may be reached through either of two channels:

(i) It is either the outcome of a *religious conception* of God as the all-embracing and all-eternal Reality, a conception which usually has its root in mystical experience;

(ii) or of the assumption that the Real or the Absolute, as Hegel calls it, which is all that is, is ultimately one, eternal and infinite, in itself, unknowable and above all experiences. This is the more philosophical attitude, and according to it the Real need not, and, indeed, often is not, called God or referred to by the third personal singular pronoun. The former seems to be the channel through which the Moslem pantheists, including Ibnul 'Arabí and his school, arrived at their doctrine, although they inevitably found themselves obliged to resort to some philosophical form of dialectic or other in

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 604.

order to give a logical shape to their doctrine. In Ibnul 'Arabí's case, this dialectic does not endeavour to prove the existence of God, for He is beyond all proof. "He alone is the proof of His own existence which is manifested in the *a'yān* of contingent beings."¹ How can it be possible to prove the existence of Him who exists everywhere and at all times? "There is nothing but God, nothing in existence other than He; there is not even a 'there' where the Essence of all things is one."² "From whom dost thou flee and there is naught in existence but He?"³ "My eye sees naught but His 'face' (Essence),⁴ and my ear hears no other than His speech."⁵ Neither does the dialectic intend to prove the essential unity of all beings or to demonstrate the impossibility of the existence of anything other than God, for this is taken for granted. The sole purpose of his dialectic, however, is to show the inherent deficiency of the human intellect and its failure to grasp the essential whole as a whole and to prove that the so-called multiplicity of phenomenal objects have no reality *in themselves*, and have their sole justification and explanation (as a multiplicity) in the way *we understand* them.

(b) *Allah of Islam and the Pantheistic One*

It was an easy, though illegitimate and unforgivable step for the Moslem pantheists to take, i.e. to pass from the conception of the Islamic God to that of a metaphysical Reality—from the oneness of Islam, i.e. from the Islamic simple doctrine of monotheism to the philosophical doctrine of unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) or pantheism, i.e. from the proposition that "there exists but one God" to the entirely different proposition that "there is nothing *in existence* except

¹ *Fut.* I, pp. 554, 593, l. 17, p. 600, l. 18.

² *Fut.* I, p. 884. Cf. *Fut.* II, p. 531, l. 17.

³ *Fut.* II, p. 206.

⁴ Face=Essence. Ibnul 'Arabí often quotes the Qur'ānic verse: "Everything is perishable except His face", Qur. xxviii, 88.

⁵ *Fut.* II, p. 604.

God". It was their fear of falling into polytheism (*shirk*) that made them conceive of God not only as the only *Deity* in existence, but as the only Reality and the only Being as well. This transition is clearly shown in an interesting passage in Ibnul 'Arabî's "Risālat al Khalwah" where he says: "Base the whole matter of your seclusion (*khalwah*) upon facing God with absolute unification which is not marred by any (form of) polytheism, implicit or explicit, and by denying, with absolute conviction, all causes and intermediaries, whole and part, for verily if you are deprived of such *tawhîd*, you will be bound to fall into polytheism."¹ To face God *alone* and to deny all causes and intermediaries (*wasā'it*) *other than He*, is the Moslem doctrine of *tawhîd*, but to rule out all notion of causality even of God (which is implied by the word "whole") and to assert "absolute unification" (*al tawhîd al mutlaq*)—(and we know what Ibnul 'Arabî meant by absolute unification)—is a pantheistic doctrine.

Having consciously, or unconsciously, made this transition, the Moslem pantheists endeavoured to establish their position and to verify their doctrine. The philosophically inclined among them found some comfort in speculation; the mystically inclined found their infallible proof in their ecstatic experience in which they felt for themselves the unity of the whole and the immanence of the One in all. Ibnul 'Arabî combines both methods. But neither the philosophers among them, nor the mystics, nor the theosophists like Ibnul 'Arabî have succeeded in proving the fundamental propositions that God *is* the Whole or that the Whole *is* a *unity*. Is there *a priori* reason for assuming, as the pantheists and absolute-idealists seem to do, that if the Absolute (as the idealists call it) or the Real (as the Moslem pantheists call it) exists, and if it is a unity, it must be the universe, or that the universe as a whole is an essential unity? The pantheistic Sûfis are well aware of the difficulty, and the only proof they offer us, which they regard as infallible, is the supermental

¹ MS. Loth Cat. 657², fol. 14.

intuition they experience in their mystic state of *fanā'* in which they feel one with God. But it is fallacious to say that from the fact that under certain mystical experiences I *feel* one with an unknown power I choose to call God, I am entitled to assert the ontological proposition that *I am* one with God and from this to make the much wider generalisation that everything that is, or will be, is one with God, and *that God is All* that exists. A mystic has every right to his experience *as an experience*, but he is not justified in putting an interpretation on it which amounts to a *metaphysical theory of the whole* of Reality. Mysticism, as such, is not an ontological doctrine and must not be taken as the ground of an ontological doctrine. It is true that Ibnul 'Arabí, unlike many other Moslem pantheists, does not look upon mysticism in that way. With him, it is an end in itself and not a means of proving the essential unity of the mystic (or of the universe) with God. It is an experience in which the self-evident proposition that "Reality is essentially one" is *verified*. He denies union with God in the sense of *becoming* one with God. There is no becoming whatever on his theory, but there is *realisation* of the already existing fact that you *are* one with God. This is the reason why Ibnul 'Arabí deserves to be called a pantheist in the full sense of the term more than the majority of the so-called pantheistic Šūfis, e.g. Ḥallāj. It was imperative, therefore, that Ibnul 'Arabí, having completely altered the conception of the God of Islam and having replaced it by a fundamentally different one, should have left alone all the ethical attributes which make God a personality and avoided using language which describes Him as such. But he does not always do this. He sometimes tries to bring into harmony the two different notions of God, the pantheistic and the theistic, with the result that he utterly fails. How can it be possible to harmonise the notion of Allah "like unto Him there is nothing"¹ with the pantheistic One who is everywhere and everything?

¹ Qur'ān XLII, 9.

(c) *The Notion of a Deity in Ibnul 'Arabî's Doctrine*

It has already been said that Ibnul 'Arabî's pantheism is a form of acosmism. It is fundamental to bear in mind that there is a deity of some sort in it, and whatever else this deity may be, it is not the ethical and personal God of religion—no pantheistic God ever is.¹ His is the sort of pantheism which, as Bossuet says, "makes everything God except God Himself". But it is the insistence on a notion of God, even if it makes everything God, that distinguishes the pantheism of people like Ibnul 'Arabî and Spinoza² from cold-blooded materialism. Their religious feeling and attitude differ but little from that of ordinary theists. Indeed, sometimes their feeling is even deeper and more intense. Though they regard the universe as one with Reality, they love this Reality and worship it, not in the sense of praying to it, but through realising their utter helplessness as mere "forms" and "appearance" in contrast to its self-subsistence and independence. No theist can give vent to a deeper sentiment than that of the pantheistic Ibnul 'Arabî when he says: "So on Him alone we depend for everything: our dependence on other things is in reality dependence on Him, for they are nothing but His appearances. Bāyazîd once asked God, 'O Lord, with what can I draw nigh to Thee?' whereupon God replied 'with that which does not belong to me', to wit servility and dependence."³ For a materialistic pantheist, the *multiplicity* of phenomena is all that matters—all that exists and all that is real. Ibnul 'Arabî, on the other hand, worships and glorifies (in his own way) that which lies beyond the phenomena, the Reality which underlies all and controls all—that which reflects, as in a mirror—its being and perfec-

¹ Cf. *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History*, by A. M. Fairbairn, London, 1876, p. 382.

² We may call their doctrine Idealistic or Spiritualistic Pantheism.

³ The subject is treated in an admirable manner in *Fut.* II, p. 21. The same idea is expressed in a remarkable way in Ibnul 'Arabî's *Shajaratul Kawn*, Cairo, 1343, p. 27, where Ibnul 'Arabî voices his deepest religious feeling towards the *Whole*.

tions in the Phenomenal World. It is for this reason that Ibnul 'Arabí lays emphasis on both aspects of Reality—immanence and transcendence, although the degree of emphasis on the one or the other varies with his mood. His emphasis on the immanent aspect is, at times, so strong that it gives his system the appearance of materialistic pantheism,¹ as when he identifies God with the Ash'arite's Primal Substance and all phenomena with its states or accidents.² But at other times, i.e. when the religious feeling speaks within him, he lays more stress on the transcendent aspect. "For He, glory to Him", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "has no resemblance whatever to His creation. His Essence cannot be apprehended by us, so we cannot compare it with tangible objects, neither are His actions like ours," etc., etc.³

(d) *Ibnul 'Arabí's Doctrine of Pantheism and Neoplatonism*

It is obvious that Ibnul 'Arabí's pantheistic doctrine is a natural outcome of typically Islamic thought with very little Hellenistic and particularly Neoplatonic element in it. It is an adaptation of the Ash'arites' theory of the external world as being essentially one substance with an infinity of attributes or changeable states. This supplies the formal aspect of Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine of Reality as a whole; the only difference between the two doctrines being, as Ibnul 'Arabí himself remarks, that the Ash'arites call the Essence that underlies all phenomena a substance and he calls it God or the One. We have also seen that, in another way, Ibnul 'Arabí's pantheistic doctrine is an illegitimate extension of the Islamic doctrine of *tawhíd*. But it is neither identical with this, nor with the Ash'arites' doctrine of substance and attributes, nor with the Neoplatonic doctrine of the One, as will be shown later. For this reason it may be said that Ibnul 'Arabí has a reasonable claim to originality, although this doctrine, like most of his other doctrines, is very eclectic in character.

¹ See, e.g. *Fuṣṣ*, p. 357 and p. 376. ² See *Fuṣṣ*, p. 376 and pp. 227-8.

³ *Fuṣṣ*, I, p. 120. Cf. Section on Transcendence and Immanence.

Ibnul 'Arabí's God is *not* the same as that of the Neoplatonists. Strictly speaking Neoplatonism should not be regarded as a form of pantheism. According to it the universe is *not identified* with God (the One), not even with an aspect of God as Ibnul 'Arabí puts it, but it is an *emanation* from Him, and there is no emanational system to be found in Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine like that of Plotinus; at least not a real one although he often uses Plotinus' terminology. It is true, we find in Ibnul 'Arabí's system something like a self-development, self-manifestation, self-multiplication of the One—"the descending of the divine Breath (essence) to the forms of phenomenal objects",¹ etc., etc., which bear some resemblance to Neoplatonism, but which, unlike Plotinus' system, is more of an *absolute idealism* like Hegel's, i.e. it is only *logical*, "to be built up by pure dialectic",² not actual or real. Such terms, as used by Ibnul 'Arabí, are not meant to be understood in any sense "which would mar the unity of the One, or multiply its being or render anything other than it an independent existent". "The movement of all existence", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "is circular; it ends where it begins."³ On the Neoplatonic emanational doctrine, it is not so; it is a progressive movement in a straight line. It is a series of emanations; each member of the series *creating*, or in some other mysterious way giving rise to the one next to it, which, although inferior to its creator, reflects its perfections. The series goes down in a descending order, the higher creating the lower and the lower reflecting the being and perfection of the higher. The last member of the series is the Phenomenal World, which can never catch the first member, i.e. the One. Only in mystical experience can the human soul, which really belongs to the lowest member of the series, unite itself with one of the highest in the hierarchy, i.e. the

¹ *Fus.* p. 280.

² Cf. Pfeleiderer, *Philos. of Religion*, translated by A. Menzies, London 1887, II, pp. 79 foll.

³ *Fut.* I, p. 332.

Universal Soul. But on Ibnul 'Arabī's view there is no emanation, and therefore there is no fusion in any real sense. Where our author seems to show some conscious influence of Neoplatonism is in the details of the account he gives us of the origin of the world, which details he must have borrowed from the Ismā'īlī thinkers of the type we find in the Epistles of the "Sincere Brethren". Here, we find him, like the "Sincere Brethren", mixing different Greek systems of philosophy—the emanations of Plotinus, the astronomy of Ptolemy and the "Four Roots" of Empedocles—with masses of details largely borrowed from Islamic cosmology.¹ His metaphysical theory of Reality is inextricably mingled with such cosmogonical details about the creation of the world in spite of the fact that according to him the world had no temporal beginning. He, for instance, says that the "movement" of the creation of the world originated through the essential love of the One to manifest itself in external realities², and often cites the alleged Prophetic Tradition in which God is supposed to have said: "I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known so I created the world that I might be known."

But the love of the One to be known in manifestation is not the same as the emanation of Plotinus. Ibnul 'Arabī's system should be expressed in terms of what he calls *tajalliyāt*, "appearances" or "self-revelations" or "manifestations", i.e. the different ways in which the One manifests Himself to us *in the course of our knowledge of Him*, not in terms of *emanations*. Unfortunately, he uses such terms as *ṣayd*³ (overflowing or emanation), the One, the Many, etc., etc., the equivalent of which can be found in Neoplatonism, but he uses them in *his own* way and in a different sense from that which Plotinus gives them. For him *tajallī* is "the eternal and everlasting self-manifestation".⁴ It is the eternal and

¹ Compare, e.g., *Fuṣ*. III, pp. 578-80, with Epistles of the "Sincere Brethren", III, pp. 4, 18, 119-20.

² *Fuṣ*. p. 408.

³ This metaphor is used by Plotinus, *Enn.* v, 2, 1.

⁴ *al tajallī al dā'im alladhī lam yanzal wa-lā yanzālū*, *Fuṣ*. p. 15; cf. *Fuṣ*. p. 230.

unceasing "overflowing of existence from the Essence to the forms, not in the sense of two vessels pouring, the one into the other, but in the sense of the One conceived now as an Essence, now as a form. When Ibnul 'Arabí uses terms which suggest emanation, he always means to use them metaphorically.¹ On the whole, Ibnul 'Arabí's system is more satisfactory if not more consistent than that of the Neoplatonists. He brings in the aspect of immanence which explains all relations that might be asserted between the One and the Many. The Neoplatonists, on the other hand, while regarding the One as an Absolute Reality, still maintain that the universe is *related* to Him as an emanation, which is contrary to the nature of the Absolute. Absoluteness implies freedom from all relations.

(e) *The System of Revelations or Manifestations (tajalliyāt) on Ibnul 'Arabí's View takes the place of Plotinus' Emanations*

The kernel of Ibnul 'Arabí's whole system is that there is One Reality which reveals or manifests itself in an infinity of forms, not one that *produces* or *creates* or one from which anything *other than itself* emanates. Even the phrase "manifestation in forms" is misleading, for the Essence and forms never stood apart except in our thought. The emanations of Plotinus are better called, on Ibnul 'Arabí's view, *attributes* or *aspects* from which the One Reality is regarded. The First Intellect, the universal Soul, universal Nature, etc., etc., are not *separate* existents or in any sense independent of one another, but different ways of viewing the One, i.e. the One *regarded* as universal Consciousness, the One as an Active Principle in the universe, the One as the Life-giving Principle, the One as concretely manifested in the Phenomenal World and so on. Only that the strongly poetic mind of

¹ He, like the Christian mystics, is fond of illustrating his theories by means of misleading symbols and metaphors. He uses terms like "mirrors" reflecting the One Light, or lights emanating from one source, or circles developing from one centre and so on. See in reference to the last illustration *Fut.* I, p. 339.

Ibnul 'Arabí tends more towards thinking of them concretely, which gives them the appearance of the Neoplatonic emanations.¹

The Self-revelations of the One (the *tajalliyāt*) thus understood, are as follows. When we conceive the One as apart from all possible relations and individualisations, we say that God has revealed Himself in the State of Unity (*al aḥadiyyah*) or is in the Blindness (*al 'amā*), the state of the Essence. When we regard it in relation to the potential existence of the Phenomenal World, we say that God has revealed Himself in the "state of the Godhead" (*al martabah al ilāhiyyah*).² This is also the state of what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the *a'yān al thābita*, and the state of the divine Names. And when we regard it in relation to the actual manifestations of the Phenomenal World, we say that God has revealed Himself in the state of lordship (*al rubūbiyyah*). If regarded as a universal consciousness containing all intelligible forms of actual and potential existents, we say that Reality revealed itself in the First Intellect, and God revealed Himself as the Inward or the Unseen, and we call the state *ḥaqīqatu-l ḥaqā'iq* (Reality of Realities). But if regarded as actually manifested in the Phenomenal World, we say that God has manifested Himself in forms of the external world, and we identify Him with the universal Body (*al jism al kullī*). When we think of Him as the universal substance which receives all forms, we say that God revealed Himself in Prime Matter *al hayūlā* (which Ibnul 'Arabí sometimes calls *al kitāb al maṣṭūr*, the Inscribed Book) and so on and so on. In this way Ibnul 'Arabí goes through

¹ See, e.g., *Fut.* III, pp. 553-4, where Ibnul 'Arabí gives diagrams to illustrate his doctrine, using the Muslim terms *al qalam* (the Pen), *al lawḥ al mahfūz* (the Guarded Table), and *al 'arsh* (the Throne), etc. for the Neoplatonic First Intellect, Universal Soul, and Universal Body, etc. Cf. *Fut.* III, pp. 560-84.

² Also called the "state of Oneness" (*wāḥidiyyah*) or (*maqām al jam'*) or the "state of the Merciful" (*al martabah al raḥmāniyyah*) or simply "Allah" or the "Throne of the Merciful" (*'arsh al raḥmān*) which Ibnul 'Arabí distinguishes from the Throne (*al 'arsh*) by which he means the Phenomenal World. *Fut.* III, p. 578.

the whole of Plotinus' emanations, adding to them the Four Roots of Empedocles and many other spheres wherein God is manifested. The mass of descriptions (largely borrowed from Moslem sources) which he piles on each of them is amazing.¹ But in spite of these details, which are rather misleading, the outline of his doctrine is clear. Reality is a unity—we multiply it through the way *we* understand it. To sum up:

(1) These revelations are subjective and have no temporal order, i.e. God did not reveal Himself *at one time* in one thing and at another in another. Terms like First and Last, etc., are relative.

(2) In every revelation, i.e. in everything in which we say that Reality is manifested, the two aspects are present, i.e. the *real* (spiritual) and the *phenomenal* (formal).

(3) Although actually "Reality" is manifested in all things alike, we ascribe different degrees of perfection to different manifestations of it. God, Ibnul 'Arabí says, has revealed Himself in the most perfect form in the "Perfect Man" and in the lowest in minerals.²

(4) Ibnul 'Arabí arranges his revelations in a similar order to that in which the emanations of Plotinus are usually given.

(5) All the revelations except the first (i.e. where the One is regarded as a bare Essence) are both passive and active—passive in relation to the preceding ones and active in relation to the succeeding. In this he follows Plotinus very closely.

(6) Some revelations seem to be whole, i.e. in some the One is regarded in some universal aspect, e.g. First Intellect, others are partial, i.e. where the One is regarded as manifested in particular aspects, e.g. the manifestation of the One in the Perfect Man.

(7) Ibnul 'Arabí, unlike Plotinus, does not hold that any of these manifestations is capable of creating (except when

¹ See, e.g., his description of the Throne (Throne=universal Soul or Body). *Fut.* III, p. 564.

² *Fut.* III, p. 579.

it is regarded as identical with the whole). The sole creative activity is the One, through whose activity any manifested object may be called a creator.

(8) The system of revelations, just explained, is the same as that which Ibnul 'Arabí expresses in terms of divine Mercy.¹

(9) Even on Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine, that the emanations are in reality only revelations, the fundamental proposition about the essential unity of Reality remains unproven.

¹ See *Fus.* p. 348.

IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S DOCTRINE OF THE LOGOS

§ A

There are no less than twenty-two terms which Ibnul 'Arabí uses to designate what one might call a Mohammedan Logos.¹ References to these terms, with explanations, will be given later. The reason why we find Ibnul 'Arabí using such a bewilderingly large collection of terms for one thing is twofold. In the first place, it is due to the fact that he derived his material from so many divergent sources, preserving, so far as possible, the terminology of each source. Here, e.g., he is using terms borrowed from Şûfis, scholastic theologians, Neoplatonists, the Qur'ān and so on. Secondly, his pantheism enables him to use the name of anything for the One Reality which is the ultimate ground of all things. The terms quoted below refer to different *aspects* of the One Reality which is now regarded as the Logos.

The Mohammedan Logos as understood by Ibnul 'Arabí may be regarded from many different points of view. As a purely metaphysical category it is called the First Intellect: Plotinus' *Noûs* or the Universal Reason of the Stoics; rather

¹ The following are examples of such terms:

- (1) The Reality of Mohammed (*al Haqīqatu'l Muḥammadiyyah*).
- (2) The Reality of Realities (*Haqīqatu'l Ḥaqā'iq*).
- (3) The Spirit of Mohammed (*Rūḥ Muḥammad*).
- (4) The First Intellect (*al 'Aqlu'l Awwal* = Plotinus' *Noûs*).
- (5) The Throne (*al 'Arsh*).
- (6) The Most Mighty Spirit (*al Rūḥu'l A'ẓam*).
- (7) The Most Exalted Pen (*al Qalamu'l A'lā*).
- (8) The Viceregent (*al Khalfah*).
- (9) The Perfect Man (*al Insānu'l Kāmil*).
- (10) The Origin of the Universe (*Aṣlu'l 'Ālam*).
- (11) The Real Adam (*Ādam al Haqīqī*).
- (12) The Intermediary (*al Barzakh*).
- (13) The Sphere of Life (*Falaku'l Hayāh*).
- (14) The Real who is the instrument of creation (*al Haqqu'l makhblūqu bihi*).
- (15) The Hayūlā or Prime Matter (*al Hayūlā*).
- (16) The Spirit (*al Rūḥ*).
- (17) The Pole (*al Quṭb*).
- (18) The Servant of the All-embracing One (*Abdu'l Jāmi'*), and so on and so on.

the latter than the former. Ibnul 'Arabí was, in a sense, more of a naturalistic monist like the Stoics. His Logos is not an aspect of a transcendent Deity over and above the universe, but rather the *immanent* Rational Principle *in* the universe. From the mystical point of view, he calls the same Logos the Reality of Mohammed¹—the “Spirit of the Seal”—the *Qutb*—the Perfect Man, and so on, regarding it as the active principle in all divine and esoteric knowledge.² And in relation to Man, we find Ibnul 'Arabí identifying this Logos with Adam and the Reality of Man, etc., while in relation to the universe as a whole, he calls it the “Reality of Realities” (*Ḥaqīqatu'l Ḥaqā'iq*).³ As a registry of everything, he calls it the Book (*al Kitāb*) and the Most Exalted Pen (*al Qalamu'l A'lā*). As the essence whence everything takes its origin, he calls it the *Hayūlā* and the First Substance (*al Māddatu'l Ūlā*) and so on. We have, therefore, in Ibnul 'Arabí's theory of the Logos a view which, though based on and derived from older theories of the Logos, is unique and characteristic—a view which endeavours to account for some aspects of Reality as a whole as understood by him. Reality is essentially One whether it is the Reality of Realities or the Reality of Man or the Reality of Mohammed, and in trying to understand Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine of the Logos—or indeed any of his other doctrines—the greatest danger is to forget that he is a thoroughgoing pantheist, and regard these terms as referring to *different beings* rather than *different aspects* of One Being.

¹ Moslem mystics seem to have based their identification of the Logos with Mohammed on the alleged Tradition. “I was a Prophet while Adam was between clay and water.”

² This Reality of Mohammed, regarded as the source of all esoteric knowledge, is metaphorically called by the Šufīs “the torch of the Seal of the Prophets” (*mishkāt khātam al Rusul*): it abides in the innermost part (*sirr*) of the heart of every Sufi. Jilī, who is a close follower of Ibnul 'Arabí, calls it “the Created Spirit” (in the sense in which he and Ibnul 'Arabí use the term create) in contradistinction to the uncreated Spirit (the Holy Spirit or the *Rūh*). They quote the Qur'ānic verses: “I breathed of My spirit into him (Adam)”, and “when I have finished it and breathed into it from My spirit.” Qur. xxxviii, 72 and xv, 29.

³ See introduction to '*Uqlatu'l Mustawfiq*, K. Seb. ed. Nyberg, pp. 42-3.

(a) *The Ontological Aspect of Ibnul 'Arabí's Logos, i.e. the Logos as the Reality of Realities: the Logos as the Creative, Animating and Rational Principle of the Cosmos*¹

The objects of all our knowledge, Ibnul 'Arabí says, fall under three metaphysical categories: (a) Absolute Being which exists *per se* and is the origin of all that exists; (b) contingent being which exists through the Absolute Being—otherwise it is “not-being”: this is the universe; (c) being which is neither existent nor non-existent; neither eternal, nor temporal; it is co-eternal with the eternal and temporal with the temporal. Of this category of Being we can no more assert that it is prior to the universe than say that God Himself is. It is prior to the universe, but its priority is only *logical*. It is the inward aspect of the Godhead and the Godhead is its outward aspect: this is the “Reality of Realities” or “Idea of Ideas”;² the *Summum Genus*—the First Intellect and so on. It comprehends all ideas and all existing things absolutely. It is neither a whole nor a part, neither is it capable of increase or decrease.³ It is indefinable. It stands as near as possible to Matter (something like the spiritual Matter of Plotinus).⁴ It multiplies with the multiplication of existents

¹ Some aspects of this subject are fully treated by Ibnul 'Arabí in his *Inshā'ud Dawā'ir* and *'Uqlatul Mustawfiq* (see *K.Sch.* ed. Nyberg, pp. 13 foll.) and in his *Futūḥāt*, I, pp. 151 foll., etc., etc.

² *Ḥaqīqatun* *l* *Ḥaqā'iq*, a term which Ibnul 'Arabí seems to owe to Origen, who calls the Logos “Idea Ideôn”. It is curious that Ḥallāj uses the similar phrase *Ḥaqīqatun* *l* *Ḥaqīqah* (the Reality of Reality), but he means by it God Himself, not an aspect of God, as Ibnul 'Arabí does. See *Tawāṣit*, pp. 16, 19, 25. The term is used by Ibnul 'Arabí as equivalent to the Aristotelian category of Thought.

³ See *K.Sch.* p. 17.

⁴ Plotinus’ “recipient of formal diversities in the world of being”, *Enn.* II, 4, 2. Ibnul 'Arabí calls it *al Ḥabā'* (Mist or Dust) and does not mean by it the gross material substance which has extension and occupies space. Ibnul 'Arabí spiritualises Matter to such an extent that it ceases to be material. It is better called “spirit” or the spiritual world. And when Ibnul 'Arabí calls it the universal idea or a universal, he neither means the “universal” of the logicians nor the “idea” of the psychologists. He does not mean that the universe is made up of a number of universals such as “redness”, “squareness” and “roughness”, etc., etc.

but does not divide (except in thought). One could say it is God or the universe, but one could also say that it is neither. From it the universe proceeds as a "particular" proceeds from a universal.¹ It contains the realities (ideas being identified with realities: *ḥaqā'iq*) of diverse objects, yet in itself it remains homogeneous. It stands in the closest relation to God's knowledge. It is known to God through itself, i.e. it is the consciousness of God. It is not the divine knowledge itself, but rather the *content* and the *substance* of such knowledge. In it the knower, the known and knowledge itself are one. Through it the universe is brought to manifestation. It is the "store" of intelligible and archetypal ideas of the world of "becoming". The "Reality of Realities" thus described is no more other than God than a potentiality, which under certain conditions becomes an actuality, can be called other than this actuality. It is God conceived as the self-revealing Principle of the universe: God as manifesting Himself in a form of universal consciousness, at no particular time or place, but as the Reality which underlies all realities and as a being whose consciousness is identical with His Essence.

The Reality of Realities is completely manifested in the world which "reflects" its positive being. It is perfect, and the universe which manifests its perfection is perfect.² But while the universe manifests this perfection analytically, Man alone (the Perfect Man, not the Animal Man) manifests it synthetically.

Ibnul 'Arabī attributes to this Reality of Realities or the First Intellect, etc., etc., a creative activity which is very much analogous to the volitional activity of Man, but we have already seen what he means by creation and God as the

¹ Cf. Section on the *a'yān thābita* and in what sense Ibnul 'Arabī is a realist.

² Ibnul 'Arabī attributes the saying *Laysa fi'l-ʾimkān abda'u mim mā kān* ("it is not possible to conceive of or to have a more perfect world") to Ghazālī. See *K Sch.* p. 25. Cf. Plotinus, where he says: "What more beautiful image of the Divine could there be than this world except the world yonder?" *Christian Mysticism*, by Inge, p. 93.

Creator. It has, he says, the same relation to the latent realities of things (*al a'yān al thābita*) as that which our minds have to their volitional states.¹ Besides this creative activity, Ibnul 'Arabí attributes to the Reality of Realities rationality. It is through it, as we have already seen, that God becomes conscious of Himself. Like Plotinus, Ibnul 'Arabí believes that "to think itself belongs to the Mind (which is *Ḥaqqīqatu'l Ḥaqqā'iq* here) not to the One".² This consciousness has reached its highest point in the Perfect Man in whom the object of creation is realised—i.e. the desire of God to be known, and it is in the Perfect Man that God knows Himself perfectly.

The Reality of Realities marks the first step by which the Absolute is removed from its absoluteness in the process of its descent (to our knowledge). It is the First Epiphany of God to whom God addressed Himself, as the Tradition of the Prophet says: "I have not created a creature dearer to Me than thee: with thee I give and with thee I take and with thee I punish, etc., etc."³

The figures on p. 71 opposite may serve to illustrate the whole theory of the Reality of Realities and to show its place in Ibnul 'Arabí's metaphysical doctrine.

(b) *The Mystical Aspect of the Logos*

The mystical aspect of Ibnul 'Arabí's Logos connects itself with Mohammed as the head of the Ṣūfī hierarchy and the "home" of their "esoteric" knowledge. But it is not Mohammed the Prophet, i.e. not the *form* of Mohammed, that is identified with the Logos, it is the Reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of Mohammed⁴ which is the active Principle in all divine and esoteric knowledge.

¹ See *K.Sch.* p. 70.

² *Enn.* v, 1, 9.

³ Ibnul 'Arabí's *Com. on the Qur'ān*, I, p. 6.

⁴ The former is identified by Qāshānī with "the One as manifested in all the divine Names and all grades of phenomenal existence—the latter with the divine Essence as manifesting itself in the First Epiphany. See Qāshānī's *Com. on the Fus.* p. 430.

The identification of this Principle with Mohammed was made long before Ibnul 'Arabí by other Šūfís, e.g. Ḥallāj, but it was not cast into a philosophic form such as we find here. Mohammed—the Reality of Mohammed—means in Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine the First Intellect, the Universal Rational Principle which finds its fullest manifestation in the

Fig. 1 illustrates the relation between the divine Essence and the Rational Principle of the Universe.

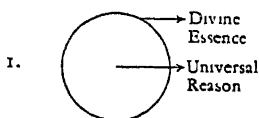


Fig. 2 illustrates the relation between the Universal Reason and its contents (*Ḥaqqīqatū'l-Ḥaqā'iq*). it is the state of Self-consciousness of the One.

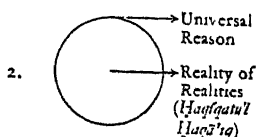


Fig. 3 illustrates the relation of the Reality of Realities to Man as forming the "focus" of Consciousness in the Mind of God (consciousness, i.e. *not* intelligence).

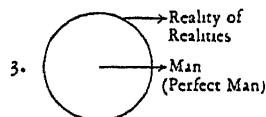
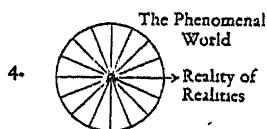


Fig. 4 illustrates the relation between the Reality of Realities and the Phenomenal World. The divine Essence has only one aspect (*ultifāṭah* "turn") to all beings in the Phenomenal World, but the Reality of Realities has as many aspects as there are beings.¹



class of men coming under Ibnul 'Arabí's category of the "Perfect Man".² It is what Ibnul 'Arabí means by the *Qutb* (Pole), the Spiritual Head of the hierarchy of Prophets and Saints.

¹ K.Sch. p. 82.

² Mohammed alone, the Reality or the Spirit of Mohammed, can be called 'Abdullah, Ibnul 'Arabí says (Allah being the Name which comprises all the divine Names). Other "Perfect Men" are called 'Abdu'l Malik, 'Abdu'l Rabb and so on, regarded as subordinate Principles or manifestations of 'Abdullah, the head of their hierarchy. See *Fut.* II, p. 8, l. 10 from foot.

(c) *The Relation between the Reality of Mohammed—the "Qutb"—and other Prophets and Saints*

This point is treated fully in Ibnul 'Arabí's *Fuṣṣu'l Hikam* and forms its very theme. Each prophet in the *Fuṣṣuṣ* is called a "logos" but not *the* Logos—the latter term being preserved for the "Head" of the hierarchy, i.e. Mohammed. Ibnul 'Arabí calls everything a Logos in so far as it participates in the universal principle of Reason and Life, i.e. everything is a "word" (*kalimah*) of God,¹ but Prophets and Saints have been marked out especially on account of the fact that they manifest the activities and perfections of the universal Logos Mohammed in a perfect degree. The difference between Mohammed (the Spirit or Reality of Mohammed) and the rest of the prophets and saints is somewhat similar to that between a whole and its parts. He unites in himself what exists in them separately, but the difference between him and Adam particularly is that between the inward and the outward aspects of one being. In this world Mohammed is the inward aspect of Adam (Mankind). In the next world (the world of the Unseen) Adam will be the inward aspect and Mohammed the outward (i.e. the form of Mohammed = Adam = Man = the *Nāsūt*, while the Reality of Mohammed = the Real Adam = the *Lāhūt*).²

The reason why the Prophets are called "logoi" (*kalimāt*), a term which curiously enough is used in the Qur'ān for Christ,³ may be one of the following:

(i) either that the Muslim writers borrowed the term from

¹ Ibnul 'Arabí quotes the Qur'ānic verse. "Say were the sea ink for the 'words' of my Lord", etc. Qur. XVIII, 98. See *Fuṣ*. p. 270.

² See *Fuṣ*. II, p. 115, l. 12. The difference between Ibnul 'Arabí and Ḥallāj on the terms *Nāsūt* and *Lāhūt* has already been explained in the chapter on Ibnul 'Arabí's metaphysical theory.

³ "Verily the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, is but the Apostle of God, and His Word which He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him." Qur. IV, 169. In this verse we certainly have the rudiments of the Christian Logos doctrine. Christ is identified with the Logos (the Word) and the spirit (*rūḥ*). We also find that the Qur'ān calls any spirit (*rūḥ*) a "word" of God—and everything a word of God. The spirit belongs to the "world of Command" (*'ālamu'l amr*) *amr* = be = word. See Qur. XVII, 109 and XVII, 87; cf. *Fuṣ*. IV, p. 253, l. 7 from foot.

the Neoplatonists of Alexandria and the Jewish Philosophers, which is highly probable; or

(ii) that it was a case where they used the causative word "Be" (*kun*) for the "caused" (the created being), i.e. that it was a case of what the Arabic Grammarians call *isti'māl al sabab makān al musabbab*; or

(iii) as suggested by Qāshānī in his *Commentary on the Fusūṣ* when he says that created beings stand to the Universal Essence (the Breath of the Merciful) in the same relation as that in which spoken words stand to the human breath.¹ And just as the spoken "words" point to something above and beyond their forms, i.e. their meaning, so the logoi refer to something above and beyond their forms, i.e. their hidden Reality (the Reality of Mohammed or the Reality of Realities or God Himself). But as I have already remarked, the first alternative seems to be the most tenable.

These Logoi (*kalimāt*) or "Verba Dei" are all united in the one universal Principle which acts through all rational beings and which Ibnul 'Arabī identifies with the Spirit or Reality of Mohammed. It is the active Principle in all revelation and inspiration. Through it the divine knowledge is transmitted to all Prophets and Saints, even to Mohammed himself (the Prophet). To the Spirit of Mohammed alone are given the *Jawāmi'u'l kalim*.² "Mohammed was a Prophet when Adam was between water and clay."³ His spirit has

¹ Qāsh. *Com. on the Fus.* p. 275

² *Verba Dei* or the most comprehensive "words" or the unity of the Logoi according as the word *kalim* is taken to mean "words" or "logoi". But *kalim* may also mean the contents of the divine Consciousness, the objects of the divine Names or the divine Names themselves: see *Fus.* p. 429 and cf. *Fut.* i, pp. 109-10 where Ibnul 'Arabī says *Jawāmi'u'l kalim* are (a) the divine Essence, (b) the Phenomenal World, and (c) the relation between them Cf. *Fut.* ii, p. 756. For what Ibnul 'Arabī says about Mohammed as being the source of all esoteric knowledge see *Fus.* pp. 9, 51, 54, 60, etc., etc. Cf. *Fut.* i, p. 196, l. 15 from foot for a description of the Quṭb himself.

³ This is the Tradition which the Sūfis take as a proof of the pre-existence and eternity of Mohammed as a spirit. Ghazālī rejects this view. He interprets the Tradition as meaning that Mohammed was *ordained* or *predestined* from eternity to be a Prophet. Ibnul 'Arabī believes in the eternity of Mohammed as a *cosmic Principle* (i.e. the Spirit of Mohammed), see *Fus.* p. 54; cf. *Fut.* i, p. 174.

been manifesting itself since Adam in all Prophets and Saints.

It is one of the main objects of Ibnul 'Arabí in his *Fuṣṣu'l Hikam* to show how the different Prophets and Saints derive their knowledge (which he calls wisdom) from the Spirit of the "Seal" (Mohammed), and how each of them possesses such knowledge as determined by the particular divine Name under whose influence he happens to be.¹ Mohammed alone is under the influence of *all* the divine Names or the Name "Allah" which comprises all other Names.

Even when a Mohammedan Saint, Ibnul Arabí goes on to say, "inherits" his knowledge from a Prophet such as Jesus or Moses, he does so through the spirit or the "light" of Mohammed.² This is one point where Mohammedan saintship according to Ibnul 'Arabí resembles "Prophecy", i.e. in the sense that both Mohammedan Saints and the Prophets drink at the same fountain of knowledge.³

Mohammed is the only unique and unparalleled being in existence: hence his singularity (*fardıyyah*). There is nothing above him except the Absolute Essence. Regarding him as identical with the First Intellect or *Haqıqatu'l Haqā'iq*, Ibnul 'Arabí calls him *al barẓakh* (the intermediary stage) between the Godhead and the Phenomenal World—a link between the Eternal and the temporal, the Necessary and the contingent, the Real and the phenomenal, the Active and the passive and so on.⁴

The Reality (or the Spirit) of Mohammed thus explained, as expressing some aspects of the universal Logos, has the following characteristics:

(1) It is the indwelling revealer of God—the transmitter

¹ Not only Prophets and Saints, but every rational being, Ibnul 'Arabí holds, is under the influence of one divine Name or other and the knowledge of each is determined by a certain Name. See *Fuṣ.* I, p. 279, l. 14 from foot.

² Ibnul 'Arabí's "Risālah fī kayfiyyat al Wuṣūl ilā Rabbi-l 'Izzah", MS. 657¹, fol. 8-9.

³ Ibnul 'Arabí quotes the Tradition: "The sages of my people are like the Prophets of the Sons of Israel."

⁴ See *Fuṣ.* p. 310.

of all divine knowledge to all who possess it, even the *Qutb* of all *qutbs* (i.e. Mohammed himself),¹ a view which is strikingly similar to the Ismā'īlian doctrine of the Infallible *Imām* who is for ever incarnating himself in different forms. But unlike the Ismā'īlīs, Ibnul 'Arabī does not believe in the infallibility of the "external Leader", although he holds that the *hidden Imām* or *Qutb* (the Reality of Mohammed) is infallible.²

(2) As a cosmological Principle it is regarded as the "cause" (in Ibnul 'Arabī's sense) of all creation. It is identified with the *Rūb* (the Holy Spirit)³ and the creative activity of God (*al Ḥaqqu'l Makhlūqu bīhi*).⁴ It is something like Wordsworth's "Duty" which keeps the stars in their courses, a sort of inner harmony. It is the maintaining and ruling Principle of the Cosmos: the life-giving Principle in all beings.⁵

(d) *The Relation of Ibnul 'Arabī's Theory of the "Qutb" (or the Reality of Mohammed) to his General Metaphysical Doctrine*

The exact position of the *Qutb* as a cosmic Principle and its relation both to God and the hierarchy of Prophets and Saints are explained in a most admirable way by Ibnul 'Arabī in connection with what he calls the mystic "station" of *tanẓīhu'l tawḥīd* (absolute transcendence of the unity of God) to which reference has already been made. I can do

¹ See *Fut.* i, p. 196, about the manifestations of the Spirit of Mohammed.

² *Fut.* iii, p. 183, l. 1 foil.

³ Ibnul 'Arabī identifies the Spirit of Mohammed, with the *Rūb* mentioned in the Qur'ānic verse: "Verily the Messiah, Jesus the Son of Mary, is the Apostle of God, and His Word which He cast into Mary, and a *spirit* from Him." Qur. iv, 169. He says that Mohammed was the *Mulqī* and the *spirit* cast into Mary belonged to him. See *Fut.* i, p. 109, l. 14. Ibnul 'Arabī adds: "He (Mohammed) is the depositor (*mulqī*) of the logos (the *kalimāt*) of the entire world, either directly or indirectly." See *Fut.* i, pp. 109, 121, and *Fut.* iii, p. 580, where Mohammed = the Most Exalted Pen, and compare *Fut.* iii, p. 101, l. 12 from foot.

⁴ Ibnul 'Arabī seems to have borrowed the term from Ibn Barraġān. See *Fut.* ii p. 79. He also says that Tustarī uses the term *al 'Adl* (Justice) to mean the same as *al Ḥaqqu'l Makhlūqu bīhi*.

⁵ *Fut.* i, p. 99, l. 10.

no better than give a free translation of what he himself says on this subject. "Although", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "this mystic 'station' (i.e. *manẓilat tanẓih*¹ 'l *tawhíd*) consists in the intuition of the Absolute unity and transcendence of God, the knowledge revealed in the act of illumination (i.e. in the heart of the *Şûfî*) is 'given' in the form of something tangible. It is the shape of a 'house' supported on five columns upon which a roof spreads. The house is surrounded by doorless walls, which make access to it impossible. Outside the house, however, there is a column adjoining the outside wall. The illuminated mystics touch and kiss this column as Muslims touch and kiss the Black Stone.² The column is not seen and touched in this mystic station alone, but in *all* mystic stations. It acts as an interpreter of the knowledge revealed to the mystic in such 'stations'. It has 'an eloquent tongue'. The mystics have no means of entering into some of these *manāẓil*, so they just receive their knowledge (concerning them) from that column outside, and they take what they are told for granted, for the *Şûfîs* have evidence of its infallibility in all that it tells them in the world of revelation (*kashf*)."²

Thus, in this symbolic way Ibnul 'Arabí explains the *manāẓil* (mystic "stations") and the Principle which acts through them. There seems to be no doubt that the structure as a whole, imperceptible and incommunicable, is a symbol for the whole of *Reality*: its outer parts represent the external

¹ Calling the *Quṭb* or any *Quṭb* (any manifestation of the *Quṭb*) the Black Stone is older than Ibnul 'Arabí. Abū Madyan (d. 594/1197), e.g., was once asked about people touching him and kissing him (for blessing) if it had any effect on him: he answered: "does the 'Black Stone' feel the effect of people touching it and kissing it? I am the Black Stone."

The symbolic representation is, as Ibnul 'Arabí himself remarks, borrowed from Ibn Masarra (see *Fut.* II, p. 767, and cf. M. A. Palacios' *Abenmasarra*, p. 69). Palacios unjustifiably attributes the whole theory expressed in this symbolism to Ibn Masarra, having no evidence for this beyond the fact that Ibnul 'Arabí refers to Ibn Masarra in connection with this symbolism. The symbolism is one thing and the *interpretation* put on it by Ibnul 'Arabí is another. Ibnul 'Arabí borrowed many other symbolisms from *Şûfîs* and philosophers and interpreted them in the light of *his own* system.

² See *Fut.* II, p. 767, l. 11 from foot.

world, and its inside the spiritual world. The outside column which connects the outside of the structure with the inside is the universal Logos—the *Qutb* or the Spirit of Mohammed—the eloquent “interpreter” between the Şûfis and the spiritual world—(i.e. between the Divine and the Human) but it is separate neither from God nor the universe.

(e) *The Third Aspect of the Logos: the Logos as the Perfect Man*

Ibnul ‘Arabî uses the term perfect in a unique sense. By perfection he means having positive being, and as such, it may very well include some ethical or other imperfections. A thing is perfect in proportion to the degree of positive being it possesses—or, in Ibnul ‘Arabî’s words, in proportion to the number of divine Attributes it manifests or is capable of manifesting. The most perfect being is God, and the most perfect manifestation of God is the Perfect Man—a term which Ibnul ‘Arabî was the first to use in this particular sense.

No treatment of Ibnul ‘Arabî’s doctrine of the Logos is complete which does not take into consideration his view of the Perfect Man—for this explains the practical aspect of his Logos: its relation to and manifestation in Man. His theory of the Logos, therefore, presented in its completest form, comprises the following elements:

- (i) The Logos as the Reality of Realities: the metaphysical aspect.
- (ii) The Logos as the Reality of Mohammed: the mystical aspect; and
- (iii) The Logos as the Perfect Man: the human aspect.

Like the Stoics and Philo,¹ Ibnul ‘Arabî makes a distinction between the potential unmanifested Reason—the “Logos

¹ The resemblance between Ibnul ‘Arabî’s theory of the Logos (the aspect of the Logos under consideration) and that of Philo and the Stoics is so apparent that we cannot possibly doubt that Ibnul ‘Arabî was influenced by them in some way or another.

Endiathetos"—and the manifested Reason—"Logos Pro-phorikos" which he identifies with the Reality of Realities (also the Reality of Mohammed or the *Qutb*) and the Perfect Man respectively. The Principle of universal Reason, which is immanent in everything and which constitutes, as it were, the divine Consciousness or rather Subconsciousness, hitherto identified with the Reality of Realities and the Reality of Mohammed, is not present in all beings in an equal degree. Man is the only being in whom this Principle is manifested in so high a degree that he deserves to be called the "Vicegerent of God" (*al Khalifah*) and the "Image" of God (*al Şurah*)¹ and the Microcosm (*al Kawn al Jāmi'*)² or the Mirror which reflects all the perfections and Attributes of God—or even God Himself. Ibnul 'Arabí puts it all very boldly in the following passages: (a) "Only two beings rightly call themselves God: God Himself who calls Himself Allah in His Books, and the Perfect Man (*al 'abdu'l kāmil*) like Bāyazid";³ and (b) "When God, glory to Him, in respect of His most beautiful Names which are beyond enumeration, willed to see their *a'yān*, or if you like you may say, His *'ayn*—in a universal being (*kawn jāmi'*) which contains the whole matter (of creation) inasmuch as it is endowed with all aspects of existence, and through which the mystery of God is manifested to Himself—for the vision which consists in a thing seeing itself by means of itself is not the same as that of the thing seeing itself in something else which serves as a mirror for it..." Adam is the very *'ayn* of the "polishing" of this mirror and the spirit of this form (in which God manifested Himself, i.e. Man) and the Angels are some of the "powers" of that "form", i.e. the universe, which the Şūfis call the "Great Man" (*al Insānu'l Kabīr*).⁴

¹ The Muslims are practically unanimous in attributing the old Jewish tradition "God created Adam in His own image" to Mohammed. See *Fus.* p. 322.

² See *Fus.* pp. 13, 19, etc., etc.

³ See *Fut.* iv, p. 13, l. 4 from foot.

⁴ *Fus.* pp. 12-16. This part of Ibnul 'Arabí's theory is typically Hallājīan. Once more Ibnul 'Arabí makes use of Hallāj's doctrine of *Lāhūt* and *Nāśūt*,

This is what Ibnul 'Arabí means by the Perfect Man who sums up in himself all that is manifested in the universe. He is "the spirit of the universe—its cause and spheres (*aflāk*) and states (*maqāmāt*) and movements, etc."

The spirit of the Great Existent (the universe)
Is this small existent (Man).
Without it God would not have said,
I am the Greatest and the Omnipotent.
Let not my contingency veil thee,
Or my "destruction" or resurrection,
For if thou examinest me,
I am the great and the all-embracing.
The Eternal through my essence
And the temporal are manifested.¹

This is not the "animal" man (*al insānu'l hayawānī*) but the "rational" man, the Perfect Man in the strict sense in which Ibnul 'Arabí uses the term—the class under which all Prophets and Saints are included, or the "Gnostics" in the fullest sense of the word.

although, as I have explained before, he goes far beyond his master in identifying the two and in regarding them as mere aspects. Hallāj was definitely influenced by the Christian doctrine of Incarnation: 'Ibnul 'Arabí uses Hallāj's terminology, but converts Hallāj's doctrine and assimilates it into his pantheistic system. It was Hallāj who taught Ibnul 'Arabí the philosophic meaning of the Jewish tradition that Adam is the "image of God". "God looked into Eternity", Hallāj says, "prior to everything, contemplated the essence of His splendour, and then desired to project outside Himself His supreme Joy and Love with the object of speaking to them. He also created an image of Himself with all His Attributes and Names. This image was Adam—the *Huwa Huwa*, whom God glorified and exalted. Glory to God who manifested His *Nāsūt* wherein lay the brilliant light of His *Lāhūt*: then appeared to His creatures in the form of him that eats and drinks." (See *Tawāsūt*, p. 130.)

This remarkable theory of Hallāj is almost identical with that of Ibnul 'Arabí. Hallāj's *Huwa Huwa* is the prototypal idea of Ibnul 'Arabí's *al Insānu'l Kāmil*; the only difference being that Hallāj was essentially a dualist and Ibnul 'Arabí a pantheistic monist. The duality of Hallāj is very well shown in his famous verse:

"I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I:
We are *two* spirits dwelling in one body.
If thou seest me thou seest Him,
And if thou seest Him, thou seest us both."

¹ *Ist.* I, p. 152.

Everything manifests the universal Rational Principle in a measure proportionate to its capacity.¹ Even the so-called inanimate beings manifest this hidden rationality inasmuch as they obey their own inner laws which Ibnul 'Arabí would call rational. The whole creation is a rational structure from the lowest mineral to the highest type of Man (the Perfect Man) who stands supreme on account of his unique and unparalleled nature. "No one", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "knows the dignity of Man and his place in the universe except those who know how to contemplate God perfectly."² He is the only creature in whose power lies the possibility of "knowing" God absolutely. In fact it is through him that God knows Himself, for he is the manifested consciousness of God. Other beings know as much of the nature of God as they do of themselves, for the phenomenal objects are nothing but His Attributes. Their knowledge is imperfect and incomplete compared with that of Man who sums up in himself *all* God's attributes. Even the Angels' knowledge of God is imperfect. They know God as a transcendent Reality which has no relation to the Phenomenal World. Man alone knows God both as the Real (*Hagq*) and the Phenomenal (*Khalq*), for Man himself (the Perfect Man) is the Real and the Phenomenal,³ the internal and the external,⁴ the eternal and the temporal.⁵ The Perfect Man's heart is the seat of the manifestation of the universal Logos (the Reality of Realities or Reality of Mohammed, etc.), and in it alone the activities of this Logos find their fullest expression. The Perfect Man is in immediate contact with Reality, and through him the essential unity of the universal and the particular is realised.

Now the question arises: In what does the perfection of the Perfect Man really consist? Ibnul 'Arabí, as well as Jílí

¹ *Fus.* p. 34.

² *Fus.* p. 325.

³ *Fus.* p. 36.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 31.

⁵ *Fus.* p. 19: "Man is real, eternal, and internal in respect of his essence which is the Essence of God: but he is phenomenal, temporal and external in respect of his form in which the Essence of God is manifested."

who follows him very closely on this subject, seems to confuse two different issues: the philosophical and the mystical aspects of the question:¹ The metaphysical theory that Man (Mankind) is the most perfect embodiment of all God's Attributes, and that in and through the Perfect Man alone all God's perfections are revealed, is combined with the mystical theory that *a certain class* of men coming under the category of the "Perfect Man" realise, under certain mystical conditions, their essential unity with the One Reality and that through such realisation their *knowledge* of themselves and of God is perfected. Is the Perfect Man, therefore, perfect in his *being* or in his *knowledge* or in both? Is he perfect on account of his manifesting, as Ibnul 'Arabí says, "the divine unity (*al jam'yyah al ilāhiyyah*), i.e. all the attributes pertaining to the divine Presence (*al janāb al ilāhī*) and the Reality of Realities and the World of Nature"?² That is to say, is the Perfect Man so called because he *is* a *perfect manifestation* of God, or is it on account of his *realising*, in his mystical experience, the significance of his essential oneness with God? Ibnul 'Arabí certainly means both, but he does not make the distinction between these two questions clear. A Perfect Man is not perfect on his theory, unless he realises his essential oneness with God. This is what distinguishes any man³ from a Perfect Man. Every man is a microcosm in this sense, but only *potentially* so. The Perfect Man is an actual microcosm, because he does *actually manifest* all God's attributes and perfections, and such manifestation is incomplete without the full realisation of his essential unity with God. It follows, therefore, that every Perfect Man must be a mystic, in Ibnul 'Arabí's sense, since in Mysticism alone can such realisation be attained.

¹ Cf. Prof. R. A. Nicholson's *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 85.

² *I'us*. p. 17; cf. *Fut.* II, p. 88, where Ibnul 'Arabí asks, "what is the characteristic of Adam?" (Man) and he answers, "the divine Presence or if you like you may say all the divine Names".

³ Although Ibnul 'Arabí often uses the term "man" unqualified and means by it the Perfect Man; but using the two terms interchangeably causes confusion.

(f) *The Perfect Man as the Microcosm*

We have already seen that Ibnul 'Arabí calls the Perfect Man the inward and the outward aspects of Reality. This sums up what he means by the Microcosm. The Perfect Man is a miniature of Reality (i.e. of God and the Universe). Ibnul 'Arabí takes pains to explain how the Perfect Man unites in himself as a microcosm all that is manifested separately or is manifestable in both the spiritual and the physical worlds. The following are examples of the points of resemblance he draws between the Microcosm and the Macrocosm. The essence of the Perfect Man is a mode of the divine Essence. His spirit is a mode of the universal Spirit. His body is a mode of the Universal Body (*al 'Arsh*). His knowledge is a copy or a reflection of the divine Knowledge. The heart of the Perfect Man corresponds to the Celestial archetype of al Ka'ba (*al Baytu'l Ma'múr*). His spiritual faculties correspond to the Angels: his memory to Saturn: his understanding to Jupiter: his intellect to the Sun and so on and so on.¹

Like the universal Logos which the Perfect Man manifests, the Perfect Man is called by Ibnul 'Arabí an intermediary stage (*barzakh*), not in the sense of being an "entity" between God and the universe, the Divine and the Human, but in the sense of being the only creature which unites and manifests both perfectly.

(g) *The Perfect Man as the Cause of the Universe*

The pantheistic Ibnul 'Arabí explains the mystery of creation by saying that it was due to the essential love of the One to be *known* and to be manifested,² that God revealed Himself in

¹ See Ibnul 'Arabí's *al Tadhīrāt 'l Ilāhiyyah* (K.Sch. op. cit. p. 211). There is a striking resemblance between Ibnul 'Arabí and the *Ikhwān al Ṣafā* in what they say about the relation between the Microcosm and the Macrocosm, which strongly suggests the influence of the *Ikhwān al Ṣafā* on him. See e.g. the *Epistles of the Ikhwān*, III, pp. 25-7 foll.

² The Ṣūfīs are fond of quoting the alleged Tradition: "I was a hidden 'Treasure' and I loved to be known, so I created the creation and through it they knew me."

the forms of the Phenomenal World. This eternal love of the One to behold His own Beauty and Perfections manifested in forms, and above all things to be *known* to Himself in and through Himself, found, Ibnul 'Arabí says, its completest realisation in the Perfect Man, who alone *knows* Him, and manifests His Attributes perfectly. He knows Him "in a manner which surpasses all doubt", nay, he perceives Him by the innermost "eye" of his soul. "He is to God like the eye-pupil is to the (physical) eye...and through him God beholds His creatures and has mercy upon them, i.e. (creates them)."¹ It is in this sense that Ibnul 'Arabí calls the "Perfect" Man the *cause* of creation, for in the "Perfect Man" alone the object of creation is realised.² Were it not for Man (the Perfect Man) creation would have been purposeless, for God would not have been known: so it was for the sake of the Perfect Man that the whole creation was made, i.e. that God manifested Himself both in the world and the Perfect Man.

The dignity of Man, therefore, cannot be overrated on Ibnul 'Arabí's view. Man is the highest and most venerable creature God ever created. He should be guarded and honoured, for "he who takes care of Man takes care of God".³ Ibnul 'Arabí also says "that the preservation of the human species should have a much greater claim to observance than religious bigotry, with its consequent destruction of the human souls, even when it is for the sake of God, and the maintenance of the law".⁴ "God has so exalted man", Ibnul 'Arabí adds, "that He placed under his control all that is in the heavens and the earth from its highest to its

¹ *Fus.* p. 19.

² The realisation of God's object of creation is the "trust" referred to in the Qur'ānic verse. "Verily we offered the 'trust' to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and shrank from it; but Man bore it." Qur. xxxiii, 72: cf. *K.Sch.* ed. Nyberg, p. 134.

³ *Fus.* p. 324.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 323. Ibnul 'Arabí tries to show that this is the general attitude in Islam and he quotes the Qur'ānic verse: "and if they incline to peace, incline thou to it too and trust in God." Qur. viii, 63.

lowest";¹ which means in the language of Ibnul 'Arabí all that is in the universe *as summed up in the Perfect Man*.

Not only does Ibnul 'Arabí regard Man (the Perfect Man) as the cause of the creation of the universe in the sense just explained, but also as the *preserver* and *maintainer* of the universe. "The universe continues to be preserved so long as the Perfect Man is in it." "Dost thou not see that when he departs and is removed from the treasury of the present world, there shall not remain in it (in the world) that which God has stored therein, and that which was in it shall go forth and each part shall become one with each other part and the whole affair shall be transferred to the next world and shall be sealed everlastingly?"²

This interesting passage reveals to us another aspect of the same view which regards the Perfect Man as the "cause" of creation. If the "cause" disappears, the "effect" is bound to disappear. If Man, for whose sake God manifested Himself, were to vanish; in other words, if it is God's will *not* to be *known* any longer, God would at once cease to manifest Himself in any form whatever, and the whole universe would vanish; for what is the universe on Ibnul 'Arabí's view but a multiplicity of forms of the One Essence? The "next world which shall be sealed everlastingly" is this divine Essence. In other words, the Outward aspect of Reality would disappear for ever and the Inward alone would remain.

This is the logical consequence of Ibnul 'Arabí's theory, but he sometimes calls the Perfect Man the Preserver and maintainer of the universe in another sense, i.e. in the sense that the Perfect Man himself actually does maintain, preserve and control the universe as a *cosmic Principle*.³ What will be

¹ *Fus.* p. 402, reference to the Qur'ân. "Have ye not seen that God has subjected to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth", etc., Qur. xxxi, 19. Cf. Qur. xiv, 37; xvi, 12, 14, xxix, 61.

² *Fus.* p. 20.

³ Suhrawardí al Maqtûl expresses a similar view when he says: "The light which streams from the higher world (i.e. the human soul) is the Elixir of Power and Knowledge and the world obeys it. For in purified souls is reproduced a reflexion of God's light, a creative ray is focussed in them."

said about the creative activity of the mystic will apply equally here. But we must not confuse, as Ibnul 'Arabí sometimes does, two different things: the universal Logos (the Reality of Realities or Reality of Mohammed, or the *Noûs*, etc., etc.) which is a *cosmic Principle* preserving, maintaining and giving life to the universe—and the *concrete manifestations* of this Principle, i.e. the class of men coming under the category of the "Perfect Man". It seems that when he calls the Perfect Man the preserver and the controller of the whole universe in a *real* sense, he means either the Perfect Man *as identifying* himself with the *Noûs* in the mystic experience of *fanā'*, i.e. the God-Man, or the *Noûs* (the Reality of Realities) itself, i.e. God as the creative and rational Principle, rather the latter than the former. If so, the "Perfect Man" is no longer a *man* or a *form* but a universal Principle—God Himself, whose perfection is manifested in everything that is perfect. "Gold", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "the most perfect form of metals, *shajaru'l Waqwāq* the most perfect plant, and Man, the most perfect animal, owe their perfection to him (the Perfect Man)." "The Perfect Man has added to the realities of the world divine realities in virtue of which the vicegerency of God (*al Khilāfah*) is rightly attributed to him. He (the Perfect Man) has 'breathed' into every form he created a spirit of himself, whereby the form became animated",¹ etc., etc. It is obvious that Ibnul 'Arabí does not mean here the Perfect Man as *man*, prophet or saint, but rather the Holy Spirit (*Rūhu'l Quds*) or the Reality of Realities or the Reality of Mohammed or God Himself, and therefore has no right to call such a Principle the Perfect Man.

(b) *The Source of Ibnul 'Arabí's Doctrine of the Logos and General Remarks*

As far as I know, Ibnul 'Arabí was the first Muslim to put forth a synthetic and systematic theory, or rather a group of theories, derived from different sources and brought into one

¹ See *Fut.* III, p. 571, l. 11 foll.

unity which one might reasonably call the first Muslim Logos-doctrine. Not only was he the first to expound such a doctrine, but I believe he was also the last to produce a Logos-doctrine of any importance. All those who came after him simply reproduced his ideas in some form or another: sometimes even *verbatim et litteratim*.

Hallāj, to whom several references have already been made in connection with other parts of Ibnul 'Arabí's philosophy, proves to be one of Ibnul 'Arabí's masters here. He certainly seems to have paved the way for Ibnul 'Arabí's Logos-doctrine. Hallāj was among the earliest Şûfis to hint at something like an Islamic Logos, and to emphasise the divinity of Mohammed,¹ and even assert his eternity and pre-existence. "Mohammed's existence", Hallāj says, "was prior even to non-existence and his name was prior to that of the 'Pen'. He was known before substances and accidents, and before the realities of 'before' and 'after' (i.e. as relations). He comes from a 'tribe' which is neither eastern nor western."²

For Hallāj, Mohammed was the undying Light which is for ever kindling the hearts of the Şûfis. All Prophets and Saints derive their "light" (knowledge) from the Light of Mohammed alone. "His Light is more brilliant and more 'eternal' (*aqdam*) than that of the Pen."³

The next great move in this direction was made by al Ghazālī in his theory of "*al Muṭā*", which was certainly more philosophical than that of Hallāj.

Nothing of any importance was done after Ghazālī until Ibnul 'Arabí appeared on the scene. He took up the simple theme of Hallāj and developed it into a metaphysical theory of the Logos and assigned a place to it in his general metaphysical system. Jílī after him developed a special aspect of

¹ See his *Tāstīn*'l *Sirāj* (*Tawāsin*, p. 9).

² See *Tawāsin*, p. 12. The last part of this quotation alludes to the Light mentioned in the Qur'ānic verse: "Allah is the Light of the heaven and the earth." Qur. xxiv, 35. Hallāj identifies Mohammed with this Light.

³ *Tawāsin*, pp. 11-12. Pen = the First Intellect which Ibnul 'Arabí identifies with the Reality of Mohammed.

it in a classical form in his theory of the *Insānu'l Kāmil* (The Perfect Man) which is substantially Ibnul 'Arabī's theory.

There are at least two distinct elements in Ibnul 'Arabī's Logos-doctrine, which he borrowed from other people: (a) a Hellenistic element which is largely borrowed from the Stoics, Philo and the Neoplatonists, and which largely influences the metaphysical and the human aspects of this doctrine; (b) an Islamic element which is chiefly Ismā'īlian and Ḥallājīan, and which influences more the mystical aspect.

It is highly probable that the Hellenistic element reached Ibnul 'Arabī after it had been considerably modified by Christian¹ and Jewish thinkers, and even after this modified form of it had already undergone a further modification at the hands of some Muslim philosophers or Ṣūfīs like Ḥallāj. The emphasis laid on the Trinity as a fundamental Principle in all the productive and creative activities of the universal Logos bears a Christian stamp. But it was not Christianity itself which influenced Ibnul 'Arabī: it was the philosophy underlying it. Ibnul 'Arabī's trinity was only a trinity of *relative aspects*, not of three Persons. Even the Reality of Mohammed is threefold:² syllogistic reasoning must have three elements and so on. He expresses this idea very daringly in the following line: "My Beloved is three, although He is One."³ Another remarkable point of resemblance between Ibnul 'Arabī's doctrine of the Logos and the Christian doctrine (as presented in the Gospel and First Epistle of St John) is clearly shown in the way the Reality of Mohammed and Christ (the Word) are regarded in the two doctrines. Christ is the Mediator between the Father and the world, "the timeless Life of which the temporal world is a manifestation. . . . The 'Word' is the glory of the Father: in it and by means of it, He displays, in time, all the riches which God has eternally put within Him. . . . He is the Revealer and

¹ Particularly the Christian Fathers of Alexandria.

² *Fus.* p. 429; cf. *Fuṣṣ.* p. 205.

³ *Tarjumānu'l Ashwāq*, trans. by R. A. Nicholson, pp. 70-1; cf. *Fus.* III, p. 171.

the Revealed, the Guide, etc., etc.”¹ All this description applies equally well to the Reality of Mohammed and the Perfect Man in Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine. But in spite of this, and in spite of the fact that Mohammed (the Reality of Mohammed) occupies a somewhat similar position on Ibnul 'Arabí's theory to that of Christ in the Christian Logos-doctrine, the difference between the two theories remains ultimately fundamental. Ibnul 'Arabí's view of Mohammed as the *Qutb* who is the indwelling rational Principle in all Prophets and saints, bears some resemblance to Macarius' (following Methodius) “union of the Logos (Christ) with pious souls. In each soul a Christ is born”.² But Ibnul 'Arabí goes far beyond this point in asserting the universality of the Reality of Mohammed as the indwelling rational Principle in *all things*. Besides, we have already seen that Ibnul 'Arabí absolutely rejects all notions of “fusion” or “incarnation”, the latter of which is the basis of the Christian doctrine. The Reality of Mohammed is God Himself regarded from a particular aspect, not a second *Person* in the Godhead.³ Further, the Father, in the Christian doctrine, is not so far removed from the Phenomenal World as Ibnul 'Arabí's Pantheistic One. He is still described as Love, Light and Spirit while Ibnul 'Arabí's One (the Essence) is a transcendent, unapproachable and attributeless Being who acts and is known only through the intermediary he calls the Reality of Mohammed. Lastly, Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine has a much wider application than the Christian doctrine. There is not only *one* logos—there are *logoi*: everything is a logos (for everything is a *kalimatu'llāh*) which derives its Power and knowledge from *the* Logos, for all things are contained both in the Mind and the Essence of the Logos.

Now we shall deal with these sources one by one. Enough has been said on the Ḥallājīan influence. The next to be

¹ See *Christian Mysticism* by Inge, pp. 46–8.

² See Inge's *Personal Idealism and Mysticism*, p. 79.

³ Cf. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, by R. A. Nicholson, p. 87.

considered is the influence of the Ismā'īlīs on Ibnul 'Arabī in relation to his theory of the *Qutb*, i.e. the mystical aspect of the Logos.

The idea of the *Qutb* is as old as Ṣūfism itself. Earlier Ṣūfīs did believe in a common source of inspiration and revelation and identified this source with Mohammed and his heirs. But never at any time before Ibnul 'Arabī was Mohammed (the Light or Spirit or Reality of Mohammed) so persistently held to be identical with a *universal Principle* of animation, creation and inspiration, or even with God Himself. Ibnul 'Arabī no longer retains the notion of the *Qutb* such as we find in typical Ṣūfī writings. His *Qutb* is not a Saint or a Prophet, but a cosmic Principle. The Infallible Imām of the Ismā'īlians and the Carmathians is the nearest thing to it we find in Islamic literature. The Imāmīte Aḥmad Ibnu'l Kayyāl, e.g., gives the following characteristics as typical of the Perfect Imām:

- (i) "He is one who gives the higher spheres power over the lower world" (*al anfus*: the souls).
- (ii) "He unites all universals in himself" (*Qarrara 'l kullīyya fī nafsihī*).¹

This shows a tendency to universalise the activity of something like a Logos, such as we find in Ibnul 'Arabī. But perhaps the most remarkable point of resemblance between Ibnul 'Arabī's theory and that of the Carmathians in particular is the hierarchal series. The *Nāṭiqs* (speakers) of the Carmathians (who are regarded by them as manifestations of the Universal Reason) correspond tolerably well to the Prophets and Saints (*logoi*) in Ibnul 'Arabī's theory,² and the "head" of the hierarchy of the *Nāṭiqs* of the Carmathians' Sixth Cycle is the same in both series (Ibnul 'Arabī's and that of the Carmathians), i.e. the Prophet Mohammed. The funda-

¹ See *Shahrestānī*, I, p. 138.

² It is very curious that the Imāmītes (the Bāṭinī Sect) describe the Prophets (the *Nāṭiqs*) as "Perfect and mature men" (*kāmil bāligh*), a phrase which very likely was the source of Ibnul 'Arabī's "Perfect Man". See *Shahrestānī*, I, p. 148.

mental difference between the two theories is that while the Carmathians trace the source of their esoteric knowledge beyond the Sixth Cycle (i.e. where Mohammed is the source) as far back as the First Intellect of Plotinus, Ibnul 'Arabí identifies this First Intellect with Mohammed himself (Spirit of Mohammed). He does not agree with all the details given by the Carmathians and the Ismā'īlians about their *Imām*; neither does he believe in any theory of incarnation (*ḥulūl*), transmigration¹ (*tanāsukh*) or unity (*ittihād*), as some of the Ismā'īlians do. He certainly owes a great deal to the Ismā'īlians and the Carmathians² and many other philosophers, but he belongs neither to the former nor the latter. Ibnul 'Arabí's theory of the *Quth*, though eclectic, like his other theories, may reasonably be called his own.

To the Stoics, as has already been said, Ibnul 'Arabí owes the fundamental distinction between the potential and the actual manifestations of the Principle of Reason, and much of what he says about the human aspect which is very characteristic of his Logos-doctrine. He emphasises the human side of the Logos and the mutual interdependence between God and Man to such an extent that he (like Angelus Silesius) considers Man's existence as necessary to God as God's is to Man. "How can He be independent", Ibnul 'Arabí asks, "and I help Him and aid Him? I know Him (I = Perfect Man), therefore I create Him."³

According to the Stoics, it is Man alone "to whom the Logos descends in such a way that his personality might be regarded as an actual 'part' of the Logos". Both the Platonists and the Stoics teach that there is a divine element in the human soul, a notion which seems to have been developed along different lines by Christian and Muslim mystics

¹ See *Shabrastānī*, I, p. 133 foll.

² See Massignon's brilliant article on the Carmathians, their Philosophy and Influence in *Enycl. of Islām*, No. 30, p. 771 foll. Cf. Prof. Browne's *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, I, p. 391 foll.

³ *Fus.* p. 125. This part of Ibnul 'Arabí's theory resembles Hegel's view that when we contemplate God, we really contemplate ourselves.

and philosophers. St Paul, e.g., says: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."¹ Ḥallāj took up the same idea replacing "Christ" in St Paul's theory by God (*al Haqq*), and on this he based his view of the *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt*, which, as I have already remarked, is the basis of Ibnul 'Arabī's doctrine of the Perfect Man.

The influence of Philo's Philosophy of the Logos on Ibnul 'Arabī's doctrine is most clearly shown by the striking resemblance between their terminologies. The double meaning in which Ibnul 'Arabī uses the term Logos (*kalimah*), i.e. as meaning both eternal wisdom² (as the term originally meant in Greek philosophy) and "Word" (or speech as the term means in Hebrew), is typically Philonian. The following terms selected from Ibnul 'Arabī and Philo might also help to show this resemblance.

What Philo calls the Logos

- (1) High Priest.
- (2) Intercessor or Paraclete.
- (3) The Glory of God.
- (4) Darkness or Shadow of God.
- (5) Idea of Ideas or Archetypal Idea.
- (6) Intermediary Stage between God and the universe.
- (7) Principle of revelation.
- (8) First born Son of God.

What Ibnul 'Arabī calls it

- (1) *Imām* or *Qutb*.
- (2) *Al Shafī*.
- (3) *Insānu 'ayn al Haqq*.
- (4) *Al Habā'* or *Ṣūratul Haqq*.
- (5) *Ḥaqīqatu'l Haqā'iq*.
- (6) *Al Barẓakh*.
- (7) Reality of Mohammed the Light.
- (8) *al Ta'ayyuni'l awwal* (First Epiphany, the First Created Being, First Intellect, etc.).

¹ The same idea was fully treated later on by medieval Christian Mystics, e.g. Eckhart (d. A.D. 1327) says. "The Father speaks the 'Word' into the soul, and when the 'son' is born every soul becomes Mary." See Inge's *Personal Idealism and Mysticism*, p. 80.

² Ibnul 'Arabī uses the term *kalimah* to mean either the eternal wisdom of God, in which case he identifies it with the Reality of Realities, or universal Reason, in which case he identifies it with the *Rūb*.

What Philo calls the Logos

- (9) The First of Angels.
 (10) Vicegerent.
 (11) *Anthrôpos Theou toû aîdion logos.*

What Ibnul 'Arabí calls it

- (9) The Spirit or (the *Rûb*).
 (10) The *Khalifah*.
 (11) The "word", the Perfect Man, the Spirit and cause of the Universe, and so on.

And lastly both Philo and Ibnul 'Arabí seem to be constantly oscillating between (a) regarding the Logos as the Godhead itself considered as the universal reason, and (b) as a mere aspect of the human or even the universal soul, i.e. only as a "reflection of that Eternal Light with which it should not be brought into comparison".

I will conclude this part by saying that the doctrine explained in these pages is nowhere to be found as a whole in Ibnul 'Arabí's works. An attempt, however, has been made to put into shape a shapeless doctrine the elements of which are scattered throughout the numerous books of the author, but which, nevertheless, seem to possess a unity of character.

§ B

(a) *Ibnul 'Arabí's View on Prophecy, Apostleship and Saintship—the Question of the Seal of the Saints*

The popular belief among the Şûfis is that the Muslim saints are the spiritual heirs of the Prophet Mohammed who is the head of their hierarchy. Each "heir", down to what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the "Seal of the saints" (*khatm* or *khâtamul awliyā*), the last member of the Saint-hierarchy, derives (or to put it in Ibnul 'Arabí's words, inherits) his guiding "light" from the Light of Mohammed (*Nûr Mohammed*). This much Ibnul 'Arabí shares with the rest of the Şûfis; his original contribution to the subject is shown in the following points:

(1) In the way he has cast the question of the Moham-medan Saintship (or vicegerency *khilāfah*) into a form of

metaphysical theory as we have seen in his doctrine of the Logos.

(2) In explaining the exact relation and difference between a saint, a prophet and an apostle.

(3) In his extension of the meaning of the term saint (*wali*).

(4) In the rights he claims for Muslim saints.

(5) In his theory of the Seal of the Saints and in regarding himself as that Seal.

(b) *The Meaning of a Saint*

Wilāyah (saintship) according to Ibnul 'Arabī, and, indeed, according to a great majority of Ṣūfīs, does not mean holiness or piety, although such characteristics may *accidentally* be found in a saint. The distinguishing mark of *wilāyah* as Ibnul 'Arabī understands it, is "gnosis" (*ma'rīfah*) and "gnosis" of a strictly pantheistic character too. Any man is a saint, according to his theory, if he possesses such a degree of "gnosis" as would enable him to understand his exact relation to God (Reality) of whom he is but a manifestation, and to realise his essential oneness with the One Reality. In other words, a man is a saint if he is what Ibnul 'Arabī calls a "Perfect Man" or a true "Malāmite".

An explanation of the term "Malāmite", as Ibnul 'Arabī uses it, might throw some light on what he means by a saint. He does not use the term *Malāmiyyah* in its usual sense as a name for a *certain dervish sect* who were called *Malāmiyyah* on account of their external behaviour which often invited the criticism (or blame, *malām*: hence their name) of other people, at the same time keeping a secret ascetic discipline among themselves in their seclusion (*khalwah*). He uses the term for what he calls the highest type of Ṣūfīs "who keep their esoteric doctrine to themselves and never divulge its mysteries to the public or even to one another. The Malāmites shun publicity, Ibnul 'Arabī says, and pay no regard to the blame or praise of the vulgar. Their

hearts are occupied with naught but God: they see and hear through Him. They know not even their own souls, because they plunge themselves so deeply in the "unseen".¹ They are called *Malāmatiyyah*, Ibnul 'Arabí adds, for two reasons:

- (i) because self-reproach (*malām*) is a part of the initiation of their adepts: but self-reproach in the sense that the soul is warned not to regard any action whatever—blameworthy or praiseworthy—as being her own;
- (ii) on account of their taking no heed of public opinion when they are *blamed* for their external behaviour. For them *all* actions are God's.²

Ibnul 'Arabí extends the meaning of the term "Malāmite" as he does the term saint (*walī*), so as to include the following:

- (1) All prophets and apostles. Mohammed is reckoned among them.³
- (2) Some Ṣūfis.
- (3) The "Singular men" (*al afrād*) like 'Abdu'l Qādir al Gīlānī.
- (4) The Guards (*at umanā*).
- (5) The Beloved (*al aḥbāb*).
- (6) The Heirs (*al Warathah*), etc., etc.⁴

He also uses the term *walī* (saint) to include all apostles and prophets. An apostle, according to him, is *pre-eminently* a saint who is charged with the external duty of delivering a message from God, and a prophet is a *walī* who is distinguished from the rest of the *awliyā'* on account of his possessing unique knowledge of the Unseen World.⁵

Wilāyah (saintship), thus explained, is the basis of all spiritual ranks and the only element common to all of them. It is, Ibnul 'Arabí adds, originally a divine Attribute (for God

¹ See *Fut.* III, p. 44 foll. for a full description of the *Malāmatiyyah*. Cf. *Fut.* I, pp. 244, 262, l. 16 from foot; p. 277, l. 10, p. 316, l. 11 from foot.

² *Fut.* III, p. 46, l. 5.

³ *Fut.* II, p. 21, l. 5.

⁴ *Fut.* II, pp. 24-9.

⁵ *Fut.* II, p. 69; *Fur.* pp. 52, 253, cf. *Fut.* III, p. 133, l. 5.

calls Himself *al Wali*), and if we apply the term to men it is only to those who have realised their essential oneness with Him. It is more general than either Prophecy (*nubuwwah*) or Apostleship (*risalah*); Prophecy and Apostleship are particular grades of it. It is a permanent state, while Prophecy and Apostleship are only temporary.¹ The "knowledge" which belongs to it is infinite, for it is identical with God's knowledge and that of the Spirit of Mohammed, whereas prophetic and apostolic knowledge is finite.

(c) *Saintship and "General Vicegerency"*
(*al khilāfatu'l 'āmmah*)

The universal Logos as identifying itself in Ibnul 'Arabī's Logos-doctrine with the spirit or Reality of Mohammed explains what he means here by the "General Vicegerency". The *real* Vicegerent (*khalīfah*) of God is the Spirit of Mohammed which is for ever manifesting itself in forms of prophets and saints (the class of people coming under the category of the Perfect Man) each of whom may be called a *khalīfah*. They all manifest this "General Vicegerency". We may call them all saints, for according to Ibnul 'Arabī every prophet and every apostle is, in one of his aspects, a saint. All these saints (using the term in its widest sense), Ibnul 'Arabī says, "derive" such knowledge as constitutes their *saintship* (i.e. esoteric knowledge) from the Spirit of Mohammed. In addition to this, prophets and apostles possess their strictly prophetic or apostolic knowledge.

In their capacity as saints, prophets and apostles are more perfect. Ibnul 'Arabī does not mean that *any* saint whatever is more perfect than, or superior to, any prophet or apostle, but rather that the saintly *side* of a prophet or an apostle is superior to *his* prophetic or apostolic *side*.²

¹ *Fus.* p. 51.

² *Fus.* pp. 252-3. Ibnul 'Arabī adds that a prophet is more perfect in respect of his *'ubūdiyyah* than a saint, while a saint is more perfect in respect of his *rubūbiyyah* than a prophet (saintship and prophecy being regarded as two *aspects* of one person).

In this unique way Ibnul 'Arabí regards all apostles, prophets and saints as belonging to one and the same group, with one common element uniting them all: this element being the active Principle in all revelation and inspiration: the Logos: the Spirit of Mohammed. He even goes as far as to say that all religions (*sharā'ī*) of the Prophets from Adam to Mohammed are nothing but temporal manifestations—according to the requirements and needs of the human race at different times—of the one universal religion which he calls Islam (using the term to mean all religions, including Islam itself, as the religion of Mohammed).¹

Now that apostleship and prophecy have terminated, the "General Vicegerency (*al khalāfatul 'āmmah*) alone remains, and it has become", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "the exclusive heritage of the Muslim saints who are also followers of the *shar'* (law) of Mohammed."²

(d) *The Rights Ibnul 'Arabí claims for Muslim Saints*

While admitting, with the rest of the Muslims, that Islam is the final divine religion, and that every Muslim is bound by its laws, Ibnul 'Arabí holds that knowledge of the laws of Islam which was revealed to the Prophet is revealed in a similar manner and "from the same source" to *some* Ṣūfīs. Nominally, such Ṣūfīs are called followers of Mohammed: *actually*, they are followers of their own laws which are identical with those of Mohammed, and which are revealed to them directly from God.³ "In mystic language", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "we call him (i.e. the mystic to whom knowledge of the *shar'* of Islam is revealed from the same source as that of Mohammed) a *khalīfah* (vicegerent) of God: but in common

¹ But what Ibnul 'Arabí really means by Islam here is his pantheistic religion which we shall discuss later.

² We must bear in mind the distinction Ibnul 'Arabí makes between *al khalāfatul 'āmmah* which we have just explained and *khalāfatul tashrī'* which belongs exclusively to prophets and apostles. The former is terminated by the Seal of the Saints—the latter by the Seal of the Prophets (Mohammed).

³ *Fus.* pp. 313-4.

parlance, he is called a follower of the Prophet. This is the reason why, when the Prophet died, he did not nominate any particular man to succeed him, because he knew that there were other *khulafā* who receive their *khilāfah* (knowledge thereof) directly from God."¹

Should the revelation (*kashf*) of such Sūfis conflict with the laws of the Prophet, we must follow the latter, not because such Sūfis are likely to err, but because the interpretation they put on their revelations may be wrong.² Ibnul 'Arabī regards such Sūfis as prophets. Theirs is *al-nubuwwah al-mutlaqah* or *al-nubuwwah al-'āmmah* (absolute or general prophecy), not *nubuwwatu'l ikhtisās* to which the prophets alone belong.³ It is a sort of prophecy, but with *no new* legislation. It simply means the attainment by some Sūfis of the spiritual rank of the Prophets and the fact that they draw their knowledge of Mohammedan laws (*shari'ah*) from the source from which Mohammed himself had drawn. "The words of God", of which the Qur'ān is but a partial revelation, "still", Ibnul 'Arabī says, "descend upon the hearts of His servants *tilāwatan* in such a way that the Saint 'sees' what is recited to him (by an angel or read to him by his own rational soul) in the same way in which the Prophet 'saw' his revelations."⁴

Besides this, Ibnul 'Arabī holds that a Muslim saint-follower (of the type explained above) has the right to abrogate and alter any Islamic law based on *Ijtihād* (non-prophetic authority), but not those which were revealed to the Prophet in the Qur'ān or authentic Traditions, for these are immutable and unalterable. Such a saint also has the right to disqualify any Prophetic Tradition the validity of which is not properly established by means of mystic revela-

¹ *Fut.* p. 314.

² *Fut.* III, p. 9, l. 4.

³ Ibnul 'Arabī defends Ghazālī on this point, regarding what Ghazālī calls *al-nubuwwah al-muktasabah* (acquired prophecy) as identical with his "absolute or general prophecy", *Fut.* II, pp. 3-4.

Ismā'il b. 'Abdillāh al Ru'aynī, a disciple of Ibn Masarra, held a similar view. See *al-Fisal* of Ibn Ḥazm. IV, p. 199.

⁴ *Fut.* II, p. 666, l. 10.

tion, "no matter how unbiassed the *ruwāb* (relaters) of such Traditions are".¹

Even the pantheistic Ibnul 'Arabí is not so daring on this point as a Šûfí like Abû Sa'íd b. Abi'l Khayr who, while asserting the same as Ibnul 'Arabí about the immutability of the Qur'ānic laws, does not regard the Qur'ān (as such) as the final revelation from God and therefore claims for the Muslim Saints the right to *add* to the laws of Islam *in general*, i.e. not only to those reached by *Ijtihād*, provided there is no conflict between the finite prophetic revelation and the universal revelation of the mystic.² For Ibnul 'Arabí, the Qur'ān as such, i.e. as an embodiment of the Islamic laws revealed to Mohammed, is final. The same may be said about the authentic Traditions of the Prophet. There is no room for addition or alteration of such laws on Ibnul 'Arabí's view, in spite of the fact that he explicitly declares that the Qur'ān with which we are acquainted is incomplete.³ Saints have revelations which are as true as the Qur'ān itself, but they may not *add* to, or in any way *alter* the Islamic laws.

(e) *The Seal of the Saints (khātamu'l awliyā')*

It is desirable to recall here what has already been said about Mohammed (the Spirit of Mohammed) being identified, in Ibnul 'Arabí's doctrine of the Logos, with the active Principle in all revelation and inspiration of prophets and saints. It is also important to remember the distinction Ibnul 'Arabí makes between the Prophet Mohammed and the *Spirit* or *Reality* of Mohammed.

According to Ibnul 'Arabí all prophets (including Mohammed himself) and saints are manifestations of the *Spirit* of Mohammed. It is the Alpha and Omega of the spiritual hierarchy, and what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the Seal of the Saints is but one of its numerous manifestations.

¹ *Fus.* p. 315.

² See *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, by R. A. Nicholson, p. 60.

³ See *Fut.* II, p. 588, l. 9 from foot.

What distinguishes the Seal of the Saints from the rest of the saints and prophets is that in him alone the Spirit of Mohammed is *completely* manifested: he is the truest spiritual heir of this Rational Principle and the last member of the hierarchy to whom the esoteric doctrine of the Spirit of Mohammed is directly passed. Ibnul 'Arabí does not wish to deny, as many writers seem to think he did, the possibility of any saint (Mohammedan or otherwise) coming after the Seal of the Saints. "What is sealed is the saintship which results from Mohammedan heritage" (*irth Muḥammadi*).¹ Other saints may come after the Seal, but they are no longer the *immediate* spiritual heirs of Mohammed. They are the heirs of other prophets or saints *through the mediumship of the Seal*.

What Ibnul 'Arabí says about the eternity and pre-existence of Mohammed (the Spirit of Mohammed) he repeats here about the Seal (the Spirit of the Seal) of the Saints. "Both Mohammed and the Seal of the Saints were in existence when Adam was between water and clay."² But what is the Spirit of the Seal of the Saints except that of Mohammed? We call it Mohammed in the "form" of the Prophet, and the Seal of the Saints in the "form" of the Seal. "The only difference between them is that Mohammed is an apostle, a prophet and a saint, while the Seal of the saints is only a saint and an 'heir' (*wārith*)."³ Ibnul 'Arabí seems to mean the *Spirit* of the Seal *and not* the Seal himself when he identifies him with the active principle in "gnosis, divine sciences, and knowledge of realities", because his Spirit is identical with that of Mohammed. "His *inward* aspect (*bāṭin*)", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "is the same as that of the Prophet."⁴ "From his torch all Prophets 'see' what they say (i.e. revelations, etc.):"⁵ "He is the heir who 'draws' his knowledge directly from God, and replenishes with knowledge all other spirits."⁶

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 64, l. 5 from foot.

² *Fus.* p. 54.

³ *Fus.* p. 55.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 53.

⁵ *Fus.* p. 52.

⁶ *Fus.* p. 60. Notice that all these descriptions apply equally well to the Reality of Mohammed as understood by Ibnul 'Arabí.

It remains now to see who the Seal of the Saints is. Ibnul 'Arabí speaks of two kinds of saintship and of two seals. The first is what he calls "general or absolute saintship" (*al wilāyatū'l 'āmmah* or *al muṭlaqah*) which begins with Adam (as a saint as well as a prophet) and ends with Jesus (in his second life on this earth as the Muslim Tradition teaches). The second is what Ibnul 'Arabí calls *al Khilāfatū'l Muḥammadiyah* or *al Wilāyatū'l Muḥammadiyah* (the Mohammedan Vicegerency or saintship). The Seal of the former is Jesus; that of the latter seems to be Ibnul 'Arabí himself. Jesus is really the seal of what Ibnul 'Arabí calls *al Nubuwatū'l 'āmmah*, because Ibnul 'Arabí, following the popular Muslim Tradition, believes that Jesus will come down to this earth again and follow the religion of Islam which he will restore to its original form and reveal its true laws. But since every prophet, according to Ibnul 'Arabí is also a saint, Jesus will also be the last of all saints.¹ The Seal of the Mohammedan saintship, on the other hand, is the *real* seal because with him *al irthū'l Muḥammadi* (the Mohammedan heritage) is closed. No saint who comes after him can claim to be an *immediate* "heir" (*wārith*) of the Spirit of Mohammed. He is what Ibnul 'Arabí generally means by the Seal of the Saints when he uses the term without any qualification.

Judging by Ibnul 'Arabí's different ways of describing the Seal of the Saints, it seems obvious that by the Seal he means himself. There is only one place where he explicitly calls himself the Seal of the Saints when he says:

I am the Seal of the saintship, no doubt, (the Seal of) the heritage of the Hāshimite (Mohammed) and the Messiah.²

In many other places he only hints at it, e.g., when he says that "the Seal of the Mohammedan saintship is a man of noble Arab birth: he is living in our own time, *I met* him in the year A.H. 595 and saw his secret mark which God has con-

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 64, l. 2 from foot.

² *Fut.* I, p. 319.

cealed from other people but revealed to me".¹ Describing Al Mahdí as the Seal of the Mohammedan saintship, Ibnul 'Arabí also says, "he is born in our time. I have met him and seen the mark of the Seal which he had on him. . . . He is *not* the famous Expected Mahdí (*al Mahdí al Muntazár*), for *al Mahdí al Muntazár* is a member of the 'House of the Prophet' and a *real* descendant (of the Prophet) while the Seal of the Saints is only a *spiritual* heir."² And in describing one of his visions at Mecca in the year A.H. 599 Ibnul 'Arabí says: "I saw in something like a dream as though the *Ka'ba* were built of gold and silver bricks. The structure was complete but for two bricks which were missing; one gold and the other silver. I saw my soul stamping itself in the place of these two missing bricks, and I realised that I was their very essence (*'ayn*). The structure was then completed. I woke up and thanked God and said to myself 'Among the followers of my kind (the saint-followers) I am like the Apostle of God (Mohammed) among the Prophets'"³ i.e. he is the Seal of the Saints. The structure in Ibnul 'Arabí's dream seems to stand for the spiritual hierarchy; the silver bricks for saints and the gold for prophets. By filling the gap of *two* bricks (a gold one and a silver one) he seems to hint at the fact that the Seal of the Saints is both a follower of the Prophet (which is symbolised by the silver brick—his external aspect) and a saint (which is symbolised by the gold brick—his internal aspect).

In addition to this, we find in Ibnul 'Arabí's writings other indications which prove beyond doubt that he means by the Seal of the *Mohammedan* saintship himself.⁴

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 64, l. 10 from foot.

² *Fut.* II, pp. 65-6.

³ *Fut.* I, p. 416, l. 10, cf. *Fus.* pp. 53-4.

⁴ See, e.g., *Fus.* p. 53, where he says that the name and the *kunyah* of the Seal are the same as those of the Prophet.

CHAPTER III

EPISTEMOLOGY—PSYCHOLOGY AND MYSTICISM OF IBNUL 'ARABÍ

§ I

EPISTEMOLOGY

The three subjects which constitute the matter of this chapter sum up Ibnul 'Arabí's theosophy. It is only for the sake of convenience that they are discussed individually here; strictly speaking, they are three different aspects of one and the same subject. Ibnul 'Arabí's Mysticism is the practical end of his mystical philosophy; his Epistemology is the theory of how he gains knowledge in and through his mystical experience, and what the contents of such knowledge are; and his Psychology is an analysis of his soul which undergoes such experience.

In the preceding chapter (on the Logos) we explained in what sense Ibnul 'Arabí's system may be called a "Rationalistic Monism". According to him, the whole structure of the universe is a rational and a living one.¹ But some "parts of this structure are more conscious of their rationality than others; others possess it, but are not to any degree whatever aware of it. Man, above all other beings, Ibnul 'Arabí maintains, possesses this rationality in the highest degree, the Perfect Man actually so, and the rest of men only potentially. The human soul, as will be explained later, is essentially a rational being; but what makes Ibnul 'Arabí's theory of knowledge fundamentally different from that of the philosophers, is that he does not identify the rational soul (or the "heart" as he sometimes calls it) with the intellect, as they do.

¹ *Fus.* p. 295.

Ibnul 'Arabí distinguishes two different types of knowledge, (a) *al ma'rifah* which may be rendered "knowledge by acquaintance", and (b) *al 'ilm*, intellectual knowledge or discursive reason.¹ The former belongs exclusively to the soul, the latter to the intellect. The following questions then arise as to what is the nature of each of these two types of knowledge: How is it to be obtained? and what is the relation between the rational soul and the intellect, and between these and the universal soul? In answering these questions Ibnul 'Arabí gives us an ingenious account of his theosophical doctrine.

(a) *The Different Kinds of Propositions (or Judgments)*

Not only does knowledge vary in kind, but the channels through which knowledge is obtained are different. Ibnul 'Arabí gives a classification of propositions (or judgments expressed in propositions) based on this principle. He holds that *normally* all knowledge is acquired through six faculties, the five senses and the intellect, counting the intellect as a faculty. They are, he says, numerically different, but essentially one.² But there are, he adds, people who do not obey this normal law of things: they acquire all kinds of knowledge through only one or other of the senses; some acquire it through no sense or faculty whatever.³ He regards as abnormal the knowledge resulting from clairvoyance, telepathy, hypnotism, and, above all, the kind of knowledge he calls intuitive or esoteric. Broadly speaking, Ibnul 'Arabí divides all propositions or judgments into two main classes.

¹ In his earlier books, e.g. *Mawāqif-un-Nujūm*, pp. 28-9, 32-3, Ibnul 'Arabí calls mystical knowledge '*ilm*' not *ma'rifah*. Following Abū Tālib al Makkí and Tustarí, he does not object to calling a mystic '*ālim*', which term most Šūfis apply exclusively to God. Later on, he calls the mystic '*arif*' and applies the term even to God, thus distinguishing it from '*ālim*', i.e. he uses '*ilm*' as equivalent to discursive reason or understanding and *ma'rifah* (gnosis) as divine science, knowledge of realities. *Fut.* II, p. 393.

² *Fut.* I, p. 278.

³ *Fut.* I, p. 279.

(1) Necessary judgments, under which he includes :

- (i) All perceptual judgments (purely perceptual, i.e. without the interference of the understanding).
- (ii) Some intellectual judgments by which he seems to mean the *a priori* self-evident propositions of Pure Mathematics and Formal Logic.
- (iii) All intuitive judgments (esoteric judgments).¹

(2) Contingent judgments, under which he includes judgments based on the understanding and the senses *together*.

By necessary judgments Ibnul 'Arabí means judgments which are necessarily true. Contingent judgments *may* be true but their truth is *not* necessary. Perceptual judgments, he would say, may be regarded as false on the ground that they do not correspond to objective realities, but he still calls them necessarily true in the sense that they correspond to *something*. When a man asserts that he is seeing a pink rat, his judgment is true, on Ibnul 'Arabí's view, in the sense that the man must have seen something, i.e. that the man's perception must have been conditioned by something *objective*. To call this "something" a pink rat is not the fault of the senses but that of the understanding. All illusions, like the phenomenon of the mirage, would be explained by Ibnul 'Arabí in this way. Judgments which do not correspond to external realities and are not conditioned by any external objects whatever are fabrications of imagination, and are therefore necessarily false. Now if we imagine, Ibnul 'Arabí goes on to say, a mental power which would govern the intellect in the same way as the understanding governs the senses, it would be conceivable that such a power might err with regard to the intellect in the same way as the understanding errs with regard to the senses, i.e. that such a power would be likely to pronounce some of the self-evident propositions of the intellect to be false when they appear to the intellect to be necessarily true. Ibnul 'Arabí does not tell us whether there

¹ The term intuition used in Bergson's sense would include all the three kinds of judgment explained above.

is such a power, but what he wishes to emphasise is the fact that necessary knowledge of the kinds mentioned above is true *in itself* and that it is due to the erring judgment of the understanding or some other mysterious "judge" (*hākim*) that it is sometimes pronounced false.

(b) *Intuitive or Esoteric Knowledge*

Of the three kinds of necessary knowledge the third (i.e. intuitive knowledge) is the most important. It forms the kernel of Ibnul 'Arabī's mystical philosophy of knowledge. Like the rest of the mystics, he believes in the possibility of a kind of knowledge most unlike that of discursive reason. It is the immediate perception, not of an external object this time, but of the *Truth* itself, i.e. knowledge of the *realities* of things as they are, as contrasted with the probable and merely conjectural knowledge of the intellect.¹ It is very much similar to Spinoza's third kind of knowledge (*Scientia intuitiva*) which, as Spinoza says, is a state in which the human consciousness is absorbed in the "Amor intellectualis Dei".²

The Ṣūfis themselves were wise in calling this kind of knowledge "taste" (*dhawq*), a term which denotes immediate experience, a state of *inner* perception rather than an act of cognition. Sometimes they call it the divine knowledge (*'ilm ladunni*) and knowledge of the mysteries (*'ilm al asrār*)³ and

¹ *Fut.* i, pp. 38-9. Cf. Hallāj who, long before Ibnul 'Arabī, asserted that the human intellect is incapable of comprehending realities. "Thoughts are mere ideas of relations." See *Tawāsin*, p. 16. True knowledge proceeds directly from the Universal Soul to the particular souls or, as Hallāj puts it, "from the Light to the light", *Tawāsin*, p. 34. Hallāj draws a distinction between knowledge of the "real" and knowledge of the "phenomenal" which correspond to what he calls Length (*ṭāl*) and Breadth (*arḍ*). To know the "real" is to see for yourself: knowledge of the understanding is limited and inductive. See *Tawāsin*, p. 75.

² See *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, by Joachim, p. 181.

³ See *Fut.* i, p. 38, where Ibnul 'Arabī divides knowledge into three kinds: knowledge of the intellect (*'ilm al 'aql*)—knowledge of states (*'ilm al ahwāl*) and knowledge of mysteries (*'ilm al asrār*). Under divine knowledge or knowledge of mysteries Ibnul 'Arabī includes such things as instinctive knowledge and knowledge of *inanimate* beings, since he believes that even inanimate beings know God and glorify Him. See *Fut.* i, p. 375 and *Fut.* ii, p. 403, and compare *Fut.* iii, p. 341, l. 8 and p. 343, l. 1, etc., etc.

knowledge of the Unseen (*ʿilm al ghayb*)¹ and "knowledge of the people who, in this world, possess the nature of the next world" (*al nash'ah al ukhrawiyyah*) like prophets and saints, etc.² We may, therefore, use the terms intuition or insight or immediate perception of the truth, or indeed any other term for this kind of knowledge, provided we distinguish it from other kinds, particularly reflective thinking.

(c) *Characteristics of Intuitive or Esoteric Knowledge*

The following seem to be the most outstanding characteristics of esoteric knowledge as understood by Ibnul 'Arabi:

(1) Esoteric knowledge is innate; that of the intellect is acquired. It belongs to the divine effulgence (*al fayḍ al ilāhī*) which illuminates the very being of all creatures. It manifests itself in Man under certain mystical conditions, e.g. perfect *passivity* of mind.³ It is not the outcome of any practice or discipline; it lies dormant in the deepest recesses of the human heart.

(2) It is beyond reason, and we should not invoke the authority of reason to test its validity. On the contrary, if reason and intuition should conflict, the former should always be sacrificed for the latter. If what prophets and saints tell us seems incompatible with our reason, we should take the word of the prophets and the saints for granted; reason is no judge of such truth. Reason may be right sometimes, but Ibnul 'Arabi holds that its rightness is accidental. Reason should not interfere with divine knowledge or attempt to interpret it.⁴

(3) It manifests itself in the form of light which floods every part of the *heart* of the Ṣūfī when he attains a certain

¹ The unseen (*al ghayb*) is of two kinds; the Absolute *ghayb*, i.e. the divine Essence which is unknowable, and relative *ghayb*, knowledge of which is possible for some and impossible for others. See *Fut.* iv, p. 163.

² *Fut.* p. 369.

³ See *Fut.* p. 371 where the mystic is advised to be so passive in his thinking that he reaches the state of inanimate things.

⁴ *Fut.* ii, p. 394, l. 3.

degree of spiritual purification. Discipline is necessary only in so far as it helps to remove the "veils" which pertain to the animal soul, and which prevent the heart from reflecting its eternal knowledge and perfections.

(4) Esoteric knowledge materialises itself only in certain men. You can no more acquire it than you can acquire sainthood. According to Ibnul 'Arabí everything is predestined. A saint is born a saint and no one can become a saint or acquire esoteric knowledge. It all rests with the predestination of God:¹ "There is none amongst us but has his appointed place."² So all that is meant by *kashf* (revelation) according to Ibnul 'Arabí is simply the unveiling of potential knowledge and the awakening of the divine consciousness which is slumbering in the heart of Man. When the veils are lifted up, the "eye of the heart" sees all things, eternal and temporal, actual and potential as they really are in their state of latency (*thubût*).³

(5) Unlike speculative knowledge which, at most, yields probability, intuition yields *certain* knowledge.⁴ The former has for its object the shadow of the Real—the Phenomenal World—the latter Reality itself. The only way of obtaining such knowledge is by means of "immediate vision"⁵ (*shuhûd*) of realities. God's knowledge is *shuhûd* and so is the knowledge of those whom He favours.

(6) It is essentially identical with God's knowledge,⁶ and though it appears to be of various kinds, it is essentially one. That it is essentially God's knowledge is proved by the fact that no one attains it unless he has already attained the mystic

¹ "That which you were in your latency is what you are in your existence", *Fus.* pp. 122-3.

² *Qur.* xxxvii, 164. Cf. *Fus.* p. 122.

³ *Fus.* pp. 245-6.

⁴ *Fus.* pp. 336-7.

⁵ The term immediate vision (*shuhûd*) is equivalent to Plotinus' *θεα*.

⁶ The only difference being that God's knowledge is absolute and that of a mystic is limited. *Fus.* p. 378. Another way of expressing this difference is to say that the divine Consciousness is potential: it becomes actual in what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the Perfect Man. Ibnul 'Arabí says that this is what is meant by "until we know". *Qur.* xlvii, 33.

"Station" wherein esoteric knowledge is revealed and wherein he realises his essential oneness with God, i.e. the state of *fanā'* in which God becomes (without any prior severance) the "hearing" and "sight" and all the other faculties of the mystic.¹ This is God's knowledge obtained in and through God. It is also our knowledge of Him through Him (*ma'rifatuka bihi bihi*).² This point will be treated more fully in connection with Ibnul 'Arabī's theory of *fanā'*. As for its being essentially one kind, Ibnul 'Arabī holds that although it appears to come through different channels, it springs from one common source. The knowing substance which is the essence (*ḥumīyyah*) of all human faculties is one and its knowledge is therefore one.³ Following the Ishrāqīs, he maintains that "Pure Light" (which is also Pure Being) is the source of all knowledge. The senses and all other human faculties are media through which this Light manifests itself. Light is the only apprehending (*mudrik*) "Principle" in all conscious beings, the only thing that is "visible" in itself and makes other things visible.⁴

(7) That esoteric knowledge is ineffable. It is like sense perceptions and feelings, i.e. it cannot be known except by immediate experience. You can no more explain the knowledge revealed by a mystical experience to a person who has not gone through the experience, than you can explain what "red" means to a blind man. No one but a mystic can realise the full meaning of such knowledge, and the only way to describe it is to explain it, as mystics have always done, by

¹ *Fus.* p. 378.

² *Fut.* II, p. 393, l. 23. Cf. *Fus.* p. 198. It is also called knowledge of the "mystery of Predestination" (*sirrul Qadar*). "There are people", Ibnul 'Arabī says, "who know the mystery of Predestination analytically. They know what is contained in the knowledge of God either by God's acquainting them with His knowledge... or by revealing to them their own *a'yān*. Their knowledge of themselves is equivalent to God's knowledge of them because both knowledges are derived from the same source." *Fus.* p. 47.

³ *Fus.* p. 185.

⁴ Here Ibnul 'Arabī seems to be greatly influenced by the Ishrāqīs and their terminology. See *Fut.* III, p. 365, l. 23 and *Fut.* I, p. 57, l. 18, and compare Suhrawardī's *Hikmatul Ishrāq*, pp. 291-300, with *Fut.* III, p. 365 foll.

means of ambiguous and misleading metaphors. "The vision is there", Plotinus says, "for him who will see it."

(8) That through it the mystic gains perfect knowledge of the nature of Reality. The unaided intellect asserts absolute transcendence of God. The mystic asserts both transcendence and immanence. He sees through the divine *tajallí* how the One permeates the Many, and knows in what sense the One is different from the Many. This, Ibnul 'Arabí believes, is the doctrine preached in all divine religions and sanctioned by *awhām* (imagination).¹ The transcendence which the mystic asserts of God is not the same as that of the philosophers. It is the absoluteness of the One which is revealed to the mystic in his "vision". It is not based on inference or logical deduction. It is as Jāmi says: "like knowing Zayd personally—the other is like knowing him by name."²

(d) *Ibnul 'Arabí's Mystical Knowledge*

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to explain what Ibnul 'Arabí means by mystical or esoteric knowledge, and now the question arises as to whether *his* mystical knowledge is of the type just described. This point is nowhere better explained than in the admirable account Ibnul 'Arabí gives us of the two kinds of knowledge which the philosopher and the simple "believer" gain in the course of their spiritual ascension.³ Here, Ibnul 'Arabí describes imaginatively the progressive journey of the believer and the philosopher towards the Truth in a manner resembling that of the Moslem legend of the *Mi'rāj*. Armed with nothing but

¹ *Fuṣ.* p. 357. The reason why Ibnul 'Arabí calls it the knowledge of *awhām* is that he believes that it is the nature of *wahm* (the imagination) to assert *immanence* and that of the intellect to assert *transcendence*. The two are incompatible except in a mystical experience. The *wahm* of the mystic considers them as complementary rather than contradictory: "He who has no *wahm* or *kibayāl* has no true knowledge", says Ibnul 'Arabí.

² Al Ghazālī and the scholastic theologians maintain that knowledge of God can be obtained through knowledge of the world. Ibnul 'Arabí denies this on the ground explained above.

³ *Fuṣ.* II, pp. 359–74. The theme of the *Fuṣūṣ*, which Ibnul 'Arabí wrote much later than this part of the *Futūḥāt*, was foreshadowed in this chapter.

unshakable faith (and curiously enough Ibnul 'Arabí insists on faith in Islam!), the "believer" (who is also a mystic) goes through the stages of the journey, gaining more and more conviction and learning infallible truths, while his companion, the philosopher, is deeply plunged in scepticism and perplexity. In the end, the philosopher discards all his speculation as vanity and desires to follow the path of the mystic and to be converted to Islam. Every one of the celestial spheres marks a stage of their journey. At each stage, both the philosopher and the "believer" learn something, but while the philosopher receives his knowledge from the "*spheres*" themselves, the believer receives his from the *spirits* of the spheres. The former learns the *phenomenal* or the apparent, and the latter, the *real*. The spirits of the spheres are prophets who pass on their esoteric doctrines to the believer. Ibnul 'Arabí puts into the mouth of each of these prophets a part of his mystical system and makes him expound it in the usual pantheistic manner of Ibnul 'Arabí himself. He makes Moses, e.g., explain his (Ibnul 'Arabí's) theory of universal religion and pantheism—Joseph, his theory of infinite and finite beauty, and the question of perfection of form; Adam, his theory of causality, the meaning of real and phenomenal causes, and the meaning of the spiritual and material "vicegerency" (*al khilāfab*). Jesus explains the meaning of life and spirituality and Idrís the theory of the changeability of "states" and the immutability of substances and so on.¹

The "believer" (*al tābí*) and the philosopher in this "journey" are pursuing *one and the same end*, i.e. the attainment of the Truth, but their ways are different and the results of their pursuits are different. The philosopher, for instance, can never hope to know more about causality than what he observes or infers from observation of causal happenings in

¹ The description of the seven spheres and their prophets and angels greatly resembles Jíl's description of them. Here, as well as in many other parts of his philosophy, Jíl shows the marked influence of Ibnul 'Arabí on him. Cf. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, by Prof. R. A. Nicholson, pp. 122-3.

the external world. The believer, on the other hand, "sees" for himself how the One Cause operates in all. Again, the philosopher cannot go beyond asserting absolute transcendence of God; the believer knows by *dhawq* both aspects of Reality, i.e. transcendence and immanence. In one of his mystical states, the believer (who is also a mystic) realises his essential oneness with the Real, a state in which the knower and the known become one. This is beyond the reach of the philosopher altogether.

Having gone through the seven celestial spheres, the philosopher can go no further; the believer continues his spiritual ascension and enters other spheres (purely mystical) wherein he is taught eschatological and mystical subjects. Of these the philosopher remains totally ignorant.

Thus Ibnul 'Arabí explains what he calls true knowledge of Reality and describes the way to attain it. What the philosopher knows by reason the mystic "sees" in his experience, but what does a mystic like Ibnul 'Arabí see? It is questionable whether we should call him a mystic pure and simple, or the knowledge he calls esoteric, purely mystical. Both his "believer" and "philosopher" discuss subjects which are common topics to all philosophers and theologians; the only difference is, as Ibnul 'Arabí tells us, that the believer knows the real, being in immediate contact with it; the philosopher knows only the apparent and the phenomenal. The one fathoms the mystery of all the problems which, to the other, are always insoluble puzzles. But Ibnul 'Arabí leaves us absolutely in the dark as to what this mystery is, or how the mystic comes to know the hidden Reality behind all phenomena. Instances can be multiplied to show the kind of subjects his believer (who takes Ibnul 'Arabí's own part and expounds his theories) and philosopher discuss. The following examples will suffice.

(1) The theory of substance and attributes which is based on that of the Ash'arites.

(2) Ibnul 'Arabí's view of the continuity of Time in rela-

tion to his view on what he calls the "renovation of breaths" (*tajdidu'l anfās*) and the "perpetual annihilation and recreation of the forms of Reality" (*al khalq al jadid*). This again is based on the Ash'arites' doctrine of the renovation of accidents (*tajdid al a'rāḍ*).¹

(3) His quasi-emanatory system of the One, which is chiefly Neoplatonic.

(4) His theory of the *a'yān al thābita* (the intelligible archetypes of things), which is based on Plato's theory of "Ideas".

(5) The question of the Necessary and the Contingent; the difference between "real" and "relative" being, and the metaphysical categories.

(6) The problem of causality in relation to will.

(7) The problem of determination and free will, and the question of punishment and reward and good and evil.

(8) The place of Man in the cosmos—the meaning of *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt*.


Such subjects were never before Ibnul 'Arabī discussed by a Ṣūfī in the way he discusses them. They belong to philosophy and theosophy rather than mysticism. The knowledge of his "believer" is far from being purely mystical. It is a jumble of undifferentiated elements derived from all sources and knit together in a most bewildering manner by an extraordinary imagination. As we have already seen, they are either Hellenistic or Islamic subjects (belonging to one or other of the Muslim Schools, like the Ash'arites, the Mu'tazilites, the Ishrāqīs and so on). Ibnul 'Arabī also appropriates older mystical doctrines and works them into his own pantheistic system. His manner of reasoning is definitely philosophical in spite of his strenuous effort to give his arguments a mystical flavour or to clothe them with a mystical garb.

This should not be taken as an argument against Ibnul 'Arabī's originality as a *thinker*. It is only intended to show that he deserves the title of a philosopher rather than a mystic. His originality lies in two points.

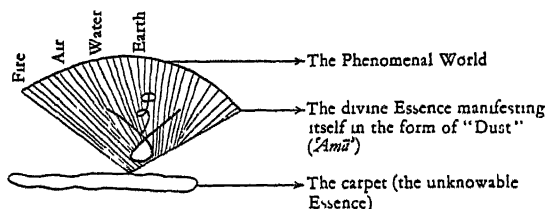
¹ See *Fuṣṣ*, pp. 300-1.





(1) In filling up with extraordinarily minute details, which are undoubtedly his own, a philosophical frame the component elements of which he usually borrows from somebody else.

(2) In the fact that he is to the highest degree a dreamer and a fantasist. What gives his system a mystical appearance is that he takes up a philosophical or a theological doctrine, and, with the aid of a remarkably productive imagination, mystifies it. He also uses mystical terms of the Sûfis (converting their meaning so that they fit in with his general system). All this helps to create a mystical atmosphere in Ibnul 'Arabí's writings, but a deeper current of *thought* runs all the way through beneath the surface. This is his Pantheistic Philosophy. Ibnul 'Arabí often deceives himself into the belief that he is a mystic and a saint. He believes all that he says about himself, and he is quite sincere about it, but there is no doubt that he is the victim of his own imagination. Mysticism is an *experience* not a system of philosophy; an emotional state not a well thought-out theory such as Ibnul 'Arabí gives us. Where he seems to differ from thorough-going philosophers is in that he does not always put forth a philosophical argument in support of everything he says. In many cases, what seems to the philosopher to be a debatable point is regarded by Ibnul 'Arabí as a self-evident proposition, not in a mathematical or a logical sense, but in the sense that its validity is proved by *dhawq*. His whole system is based on a group of postulates of this kind. Instead of presenting us with a logical argument on every point of his philosophy, he sometimes gives us wildly imaginative accounts of them. He himself lays stress on the value and place of imagination as a means of attaining true knowledge, and this is very clearly shown in his own system. He saw things in his imagination which were as real to him, and even more real, than the concrete objects of the external world. Indeed, imagination for him was a higher plane of "being" than the world of sense. It was a link between the material and the

spiritual. A word or even a letter (in a word) or a point (diacritical point) was quite sufficient to arouse a whole mass of associations in his mind, and from this mass he filled up the philosophical frame referred to above. E.g., he says that he saw in a clear vision (*shuhūd*) the external and the internal aspects of the divine Essence (*al Ḥuwiyyah*). He saw the *huwiyyah* in the shape ¹ as an illuminated figure placed on a red carpet sending up its light to four spheres (the Empedoclean Elements). This figure, he says, has a spirit (namely is its inward aspect) which has its seat in this carpet.

The carpet is apparently the One Universal Essence (substance)—the spiritual world; the four spheres to which this illuminated figure sends its light are apparently the traditional four elements of the physical world (Fire, Air, Water and Earth), and so the whole problem immediately assumed in Ibnul 'Arabī's mind something like the following figure:



It seems evident that what must have given rise to such an elaborate dream (which Ibnul 'Arabī would call mystical knowledge) is an extraordinarily vivid visual image of the Arabic letter  which is sometimes written in the shape  and which is the first letter in the pronoun  (He, i.e. Essence). The illustration he himself gives is the nearest approximation to the letter . That he should have associated this visual image with the theory of the divine Essence and its manifestations in the Phenomenal World, is just the peculiarity of his mind. This is the type of thing Ibnul 'Arabī often says he saw by immediate vision (*shuhūd*) and which

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 591.

seems to be nothing but a subconscious imagination working through his mind all the time. Many more instances could be cited, but I shall be content to refer to another striking case of this kind.¹

§ II

PSYCHOLOGY

A. MYSTICAL AND METAPHYSICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S THEORY OF THE SOUL

Like the rest of the Şûfis, Ibnul 'Arabí metaphorically calls the human "heart" the instrument through which esoteric knowledge is transmitted or the centre wherein it is revealed. It is not the heart itself, i.e. not the hollow and conic piece of flesh situated in the chest that is meant by this instrument; it is something else which, "though connected with it physically and spiritually (*şûratan wa ma'nān*) is different from it and other than it".² The word "heart" is only a symbol for the rational aspect of Man—the Spirit.³ It is not identical with the "intellect" (as understood by the philosophers) which Ibnul 'Arabí definitely regards as phenomenal and dependent on the body, but rather an inseparable "part" of the "Principle of Universal Reason", which, though it functions through a body, is neither the body itself nor dependent for its existence on a body nor bound in any way by material limitations.

This mysterious power has, Ibnul 'Arabí says, a more mysterious faculty which he calls the "inward eye" (*'ayn al baṣṭrah*) which, like the physical eye, perceives things, but the object of its perception is Reality itself. Like Plotinus, Ibnul

¹ *Iḥwā'*, II, p. 767, about what Ibnul 'Arabí calls the mystic state of *tanẓih al taḥlīd* (Absolute transcendence), i.e. transcendence that belongs to the divine unity *per se*. The divine unity assumes in his mind the shape of a doorless archaeological structure (see Sect. on Logos).

² See *Māhiyyatu'l Qalb*, by Ibnul 'Arabí. MS. Loth Cat. 655 fol. 26, part II.

³ Ibnul 'Arabí identifies the heart with what in the Qur'ān is called "the tranquil Soul" (*al nafs al muṭma'innah*).

'Arabí believes that the "eye" of the soul alone can see that which is beyond thought "when it is closed to all other sights".¹

The things that blind this "inward eye" are the evil thoughts harboured by the animal soul, and all that pertains to the material world. Once freed from such "veils", the heart of the mystic begins to comprehend the Real and communicate directly with the rational Principle of the Universe.

(a) *The Relation between Particular Intelligences
and Universal Reason*

The heart of the mystic is the same as the "particular intelligence" of the philosophers, a term which Ibnul 'Arabí sometimes uses to mean the "rational soul" and *not* the intellect. A particular intelligence, on Ibnul 'Arabí's view, is a mode, or as he puts it, a "particularisation" of the Universal Reason.² It is essentially identical with the Universal Soul but conceptionally different from it. The relation between the two is the same as that between a universal and its particulars, or a continuant and its occurrents—rather the latter than the former. Ibnul 'Arabí agrees with the main thesis of Plotinus' Fourth *Ennead*, without reproducing Plotinus' argument, that particular souls are modes of All-Soul or Universal Reason, but not in the sense that they are "parts" of a whole. As Plotinus himself remarks, it is absurd to speak of parts of a soul, since parts have significance only in relation to magnitudes, and souls have no magnitude. What multiplies the one soul is the same as that which multiplies the One Essence, i.e. *subjective* relations (*nisab*); otherwise, souls are not divisible.³ The particular souls are no more "parts" of the Universal Soul than mental states are "parts" of a mind. Ibnul 'Arabí uses a similar analogy when

¹ Whittaker's *Neo-Platonists*, p. 103. Cf. *Fut.* III, p. 263, l. 17.

² Plotinus' *Noûs* and Ibnul 'Arabí's First Intellect (*al 'Aql al awwal*), or Universal Mind (*al 'Aql al kullî*), or the Reality of Mohammed (*al Haqiqah al Mubammadiyyah*), and so on.

³ *Fut.* II, p. 88, l. 9.

he calls particular intelligences "powers of the Universal Soul".¹

The Universal Soul is always conscious of itself as a whole, which implies that it is essentially conscious of its "parts" (for the lack of a better term), but the "parts", *qua* parts, are never conscious of the whole. They are conscious of themselves individually.

Now, perhaps, we are in a position to understand what Ibnul 'Arabî means by mystical union with God, and what he means by the mystical journey towards God, and finally what he means by the "removal of veils", etc., etc. To start with, the term "union" must always be taken, on Ibnul 'Arabî's view, in a metaphorical sense. How can there be a *real* union in a mystical experience when all particular souls are already united with the Universal Soul, which on Ibnul 'Arabî's view, is God Himself? (God = the Rational Principle of the Cosmos.) The so-called "union", therefore, is but a state of "waking up" for the particular soul and the realisation of the already existing union between itself and All-Soul, rather than an amalgamation of two different souls. According to Ibnul 'Arabî the final achievement of the mystic and the ultimate goal of his endeavours is *not to become* one with God, for he already is, but to *realise* the meaning of such oneness.

At least two important consequences follow from this theory:

(i) That there is no real becoming at all: man never *becomes* God nor God man. The *Ana'l Haqq* of Hallāj is literally true on Ibnul 'Arabî's view.

(ii) That the so-called esoteric knowledge of the Şûfis springs *directly* from the individual soul itself. It is not *revealed* or inspired in any *real* sense. All such terms as transmission or communication of knowledge must be understood metaphorically. But the symbolic language, which Ibnul 'Arabî uses on this subject, is here, as it is everywhere else,

¹ "Risālah on the Meaning of the Spirit and the Soul", by Ibnul 'Arabî publ. by Palacios in the *Acts of the 14th Oriental Congress*, III, p. 154. Algiers 1905.

a great source of danger. If taken literally, it would suggest a duality of a revealer and a revealed to, a given and a receiver of knowledge and so on. Ibnul 'Arabí describes the First Intellect (a term which he uses as equivalent to the Universal Soul) in such a way, and attributes to it such characteristics, that it appears to be fundamentally different from particular intelligences.¹ But we know that according to him the Universal Soul differs from particular souls only in the sense in which a whole differs from its "parts". He also speaks of the Spirit (*al Rūh*), meaning Gabriel as identical with Universal Soul, as the only revealer of esoteric knowledge (*al mulqí*) and brings numerous passages from the Qur'ān to bear on this point.² What he really means, as he himself admits,³ is that it is the *Rūh in its particular "modes"* that is the sole revealer: that revelation is the announcement of the soul (the particular soul) itself. Ibnul 'Arabí's theory is a form of personal idealism. The mystic is said to "receive" knowledge in all the *ḥaḍras*, but the "giver" of such knowledge is the "self" which appears in different "forms" according to the nature of each *ḥaḍra*. He implicitly denies that Gabriel inspired the Prophet Mohammed with the Qur'ān. It was not Gabriel who appeared to Mohammed in the form of Dihya al Kalbí, Ibnul 'Arabí says, but a mere creation of the active imagination of the Prophet. In other words it was his own "self" appearing to him in that particular form.⁴ It is true that sometimes Ibnul 'Arabí exaggerates the difference between the unity (of the One Essence or One Soul) and the apparent multiplicity, and so, forgetting that it is only a peculiarity of the language he uses and a peculiarity of his own thought, we might be led to believe

¹ See, e.g., his book *Māhiyyatu'l Qalb*, fol. 30, part II.

² See *Fut.* II, p. 750.

³ *Fut.* pp. 63-4: "If any mystic sees a 'form' (of a person) imparting to him knowledge which was not with him... that person is his '*ayn*' (self) which has appeared in that form. Thus it is from the tree of *himself* that the fruit of his planting is gathered."

⁴ *Fut.* II, p. 429, l. 11 from foot.

that he is a dualist. But there can be no doubt that he, like Plotinus whom he follows very closely here, believes in the essential unity of *rational* souls with the Universal Soul.¹

The heart of the Şûfî, or the rational soul, thus conceived is the "eye", so to speak, whereby God sees Himself, and the instrument whereby He knows Himself *in the forms* of His manifestations, not in His Absoluteness, for knowledge of Him as the Absolute belongs exclusively to Him. To say that Man (the Perfect Man) is the focus of the divine Consciousness of God or that God is the focus and the essence of the consciousness of Man is, on such a theory, to express two aspects of one and the same fact.

(b) *The Changeability of the Heart of the Mystic*

By this Ibnul 'Arabî means that Reality, which is for ever manifesting itself in an infinity of forms and in all "planes" of existence, is reflected, as if in a mirror, in the heart of the true Gnostic who follows Reality everywhere and recognises it in everything. Every "state" or change in the one eternal substance corresponds to a state of or a change in the heart of the Gnostic. This is what Ibnul 'Arabî means by saying that God is "contained" in the heart of the Gnostic. It contains Him in two ways:

(i) It reflects all the divine perfections which are separately manifested in the Macrocosm but collectively manifested in the Microcosm (Man).

(ii) It also contains God in the sense that it contains the divine (the essential or spiritual) aspect of Man, the only aspect in virtue of which Man may be called God. But Ibnul 'Arabî lays more stress on the former of these two² senses, saying that this is the true meaning of the Prophetic Tradition "whoso knows himself knows his Lord".³

¹ Cf. Plotinus' *Enneads*, translated by Mackenna, III, pp. 13-14.

² See *Fus.* I, p. 281, Ibnul 'Arabî quotes the Traditions: "Neither My earth nor My heaven contains Me, but I am contained by the heart of My servant who is a believer."

³ Cf. *Fus.* p. 220.

(c) *Ibnul 'Arabī's Theory of the Nature of the Soul*

Ibnul 'Arabī was by no means the first Ṣūfī to present us with a theory of the human soul. Ḥallāj, as we have already seen in connection with the subject of *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt*,¹ was the first Ṣūfī to regard the soul as a component part of the *dual* nature of Man. It was much later, as Massignon remarks, that the Ḥallājīan soul was identified with the "rational soul" of the philosophers (i.e. when the Moslem thinkers had assimilated into their philosophy Neoplatonism and other Greek systems), and finally appeared in a classical form in the works of such men as Ibnul 'Arabī and Ghazālī.²

Following, in outline, the philosophy of the Peripatetics, Ibnul 'Arabī recognises three distinct elements in Man, which he calls body, soul, and spirit.³ Like Aristotle, he speaks of three souls, or rather three aspects of one soul: the vegetative, the animal and the rational souls. But he differs from Aristotle inasmuch as he does not identify the rational soul with the intellect (the "organ" of discursive reason). He defines body as a material form which has extension in space and duration in time and which is perishable and changeable. It is a particular "mode" of "Universal Body" (*al jism al kullī*) or a particular "mode" of the Attribute of Extension as Spinoza would put it. Soul, on the other hand, is defined by him as the vital principle—the animal-life in the human organism. It is a particular "mode" of Universal Soul (*al nafs al kullīyyah*). And lastly, he defines "spirit" as the rational principle, the sole purpose of which is to seek true knowledge. It is a "mode" of universal Reason (*al 'aql al kullī*) or a particular "mode" of the Attribute of Thought as Spinoza calls it.

When Ibnul 'Arabī uses the term "soul" unqualified, he usually means by it the rational soul; otherwise, he puts in

¹ See *Tawāstīn*, pp. 136-7, where Ḥallāj speaks of two "spirits".

² See *Al Madnūn as-Saghr*, by Ghazālī, pp. 5-8. Ghazālī does not believe in the eternity of the soul as Ibnul 'Arabī does.

³ See *Fur.* p. 322. Cf. *Fur.* III, pp. 313-14.

the adjectives "vegetative" or "animal" or "rational". According to him the chief function of the vegetative soul is to seek food and assimilate it into the organism. It has four "powers": (a) attraction (*jadhbb*), (b) retention (*mask*), (c) digestion (*baḍm*), and (d) expulsion (*daf*).¹ The animal soul is regarded by Ibnul 'Arabī as a subtle vapour which has its seat in the heart (the physical heart). It is material and it is to be found in all animals including Man. As for the rational soul, he believes it to be a pure spirit. It is essentially "cognisant" and is born pure and free from all sin. The so-called sin results from the conflict which arises between the rational and the animal souls during the association of the rational soul with the human body.² The rational soul is indestructible, eternal and everlasting. Although Ibnul 'Arabī believes in the immateriality and indestructibility of the soul, he does not, like Ibn Rushd, e.g., assert its impersonal immortality, although his general system as a form of Idealistic Pantheism implies it. "After death", he says, "God fashions for the soul a 'vehicle' (*markab*) of the same nature as that of the world to which the soul will be transferred."³ But this, if Ibnul 'Arabī is to be consistent at all, must be taken metaphorically. The *markab* is simply another word for the state which the soul will occupy on its return to the Universal Soul, i.e. a state in which it will be either absolutely or only partly free from material limitations and associations.

(d) *The Relation between the Three Souls*

Are the three souls, the vegetative, the animal and the rational, ultimately one soul or are they different on Ibnul 'Arabī's view? He definitely asserts that the vegetative and the animal souls are the body itself. They function through

¹ See *Fut.* III, pp. 313-15. Cf. *Epistles of the "Sincere Brethren"*, III, p. 12. Ibnul 'Arabī seems to have borrowed a great deal from the Sincere Brethren particularly on matters concerning the nature of the soul. They add three more "powers" to the vegetative soul, i.e. nutrition (*ghidhā*), formation (*taṣwīr*) and growth (*namā*).

² *Fut.* III, pp. 347-8.

³ *Fut.* p. 327.

it, and depend for their very existence upon it, but the relation between the spirit and the body is by no means clear. As soon as we begin to consider this point in relation to Ibnul 'Arabî's much wider theory of the nature of Reality as a whole, peculiar difficulties arise—difficulties which do not seem to have troubled Ibnul 'Arabî himself. On the face of it, he seems, in spite of his strong monistic tendencies, to be a dualist as regards spirit and body. The rational soul, he says, is identical with neither the intellect nor the body, although intellect is one of its subordinate "powers" and although, during its association with the body, it functions through it. It is absolutely independent of the body; can actually exist apart from it, as it did before "joining" it and as it will do after parting with it. Ibnul 'Arabî seems to reject wholesale the materialistic view about the "spirit", and holds with the philosophers that it is a simple¹ substance different from the dark and complex material substance which we call body, which is subject to death and change. "I do not mean by the spirit", he says, "the food-seeking instinct which resides in the liver, or that human power which responds to anger and passion, or the life-generating power lodged in the heart, a power usually called the animal soul, which manifests itself in sensations and movements and passions, etc. . . ., but I mean that perfect and simple substance which is living and active, the substance whose sole activities are remembering, retaining ideas, comprehending, discriminating and reflecting [yet he does not wish to identify it with the intellect!]. It is capable of receiving all kinds of knowledge and never becomes weary of receiving abstract ideas. This substance is the 'chief' of all the (three) souls and the prince (*amîr*) of all the powers which serve it and obey its commands."² But he goes on to say: "it is neither a body nor an accident (*'araḍ*) but a substance belonging to the 'world of command' (*'ālam*

¹ It is formal simplicity rather than material. As Plotinus puts it: "it is All in All and All in every part." *Enn.* iv, 2, 1. Cf. *Fut.* ii, pp. 912-13 for a full description of the rational soul and its simplicity.

² *Risālah*, publ. by Palacios, *op. cit.* p. 153.

al amr, i.e. the spiritual world) and the divine command is neither a body nor an accident, but a power like the First Intellect and the Universal Soul and other Pure Spirits (*al mufāriqāt*).¹ It is the reality signified by the word 'I'.²

The minimum one is entitled to infer from these passages is that, at least, Ibnul 'Arabī, like Spinoza, is a dualist in regard to *differentiating attributes*, i.e. that he believes that there are two *aspects* in Man's nature, animality and rationality, or as he would say, human and divine. Ultimately these two aspects or natures are one on Ibnul 'Arabī's theory. Spinoza regards them as fundamentally different and so does Hallāj, whose theory Ibnul 'Arabī seems to have developed. The difference between Hallāj and Spinoza is that the former believes in two *elements* in the nature of Man, the latter in two fundamentally different *attributes*.

Taking into consideration Ibnul 'Arabī's whole metaphysical system as a monistic philosophy of the most rigid character, we must regard what seems in his theory of the soul to be a duality of body and spirit, as ultimately subjective. To admit a *real* duality of physical and spiritual substances which are absolutely and entirely independent of one another, would be a fatal blow to Ibnul 'Arabī's whole system. We must, therefore, be content to regard him as a dualist in respect of *differentiating attributes*. Body and spirit on such a view would be nothing more than what Ibnul 'Arabī himself calls the outward and the inward aspects of one and the same reality. Death is no destruction, but a dissolution of "parts" of the so-called material form. What Ibnul 'Arabī is really eager to point out is not that body and

¹ *Risālah*, publ. by Palacios, *op. cit.* p. 154.

² *Ibid.* p. 152. Ibnul 'Arabī gives as a proof of the rational soul's independence of the body the fact that in sleep, and under other similar conditions, the soul gains knowledge of the unseen world and continues its other activities. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 157-8. In his book entitled *Māhyyatu'l Qalb*, *op. cit.* fol. 39, part 1, he also speaks of the spirit as an "emergent" substance (*jawhar 'arīd*) a phrase which, if taken literally, would express what in modern psychological theories is called "epiphenomenalism", but Ibnul 'Arabī uses the phrase *metaphorically*.

spirit are ultimately two different entities or existents or substances, but rather that we should not regard spirit as *identical* with that physical "frame" which is called body and which is understood by the physiologists to be changeable and perishable. In other words, he is warning us against gross materialism. All "frames" (or forms) are regarded by him as mere nothing—passing shadows—with a reality behind them which constitutes their very being. The human body is no exception to the rule. All the so-called three souls and the body are ultimately one. But since it is always the case with Ibnul 'Arabí that the occult is more perfect and more venerable than the manifest, the rational soul in this case, being the hidden aspect of Man, occupies this honourable position in his theory. It is the "part" of Man to which God addresses Himself, and the one that is expected to fulfil moral obligations.

B. EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Essentially, Ibnul 'Arabí believes, the apprehending reality is one. This he calls the "Light" (*Al Núr*) without which nothing can apprehend or be apprehended.¹ In man this Light takes the form of the rational soul which we have already explained. Ibnul 'Arabí insists on the unity of this principle (Light) not only in its cosmic functions as the sole operating "Mind" in all spheres of intellection, but even in every individual being wherein it abides.² Man, above all other beings, possesses this unity in the highest degree. He hears, feels, tastes; he thinks, memorises, imagines, and above all "receives" knowledge of the unseen world, etc., etc., by means of senses and faculties which people call by different names, but which according to Ibnul 'Arabí are *essentially one*, i.e. this Light. "If you apprehend sound, you call the apprehending Light 'hearing', and if you perceive by sight, you call it 'seeing', and so on to the end of the senses and facul-

¹ *Fut.* III, p. 365

² Cf. Plotinus' *Enn.* IV, 4, 1: Mackenna, III, pp. 47-8.

ties.”¹ In short, light according to Ibnul ‘Arabí is everything through which apprehension takes place. Not only that, but everything that is *apprehended* must have a special relation to the apprehending Light which is God. To put it in other words, God is all that *apprehends* and all that is *apprehended*. If a thing cannot be apprehended by a mind of some sort (not necessarily by a human mind) it cannot be a reality at all. On this remarkable theory, Ibnul ‘Arabí manages to base, with no inconsistency, both his empirical and mystical psychology, normal and abnormal. The very Light which apprehends colours and sounds and conceives ideas and forms images, etc., is the same as that which directly and immediately perceives Reality itself.

Ibnul ‘Arabí himself probably would not have explained this point with such propriety. He would still maintain that there is a difference between the intellect (*al‘aql*) and the rational soul (*al rûb*) and between reflective thinking and immediate intuition. But the difference cannot possibly be regarded as ultimate. If there is a difference at all, it must be in the different *ways* in which this Light manifests itself. While the apprehending Light is perfectly *free* in mystical intuition, it is comparatively limited in reflective thinking, and more tied down still by the limitations of the senses in sense perception.²

(a) Perception

Perception is understood by Ibnul ‘Arabí to take the following course. The senses perceive through the agency of the apprehending Light which forms their very essence and the essence of the objects perceived. The impressions gathered by the senses from the external world go immediately to the

¹ Cf. Plotinus’ principle that “different parts of the animated body participate in soul’s powers”. *Neo-Platonists*, by Whittaker, p. 47.

² Ibnul ‘Arabí expresses precisely the same theory in his *Mābiyyatun’l Qalb* (*op. cit.* fol. 36, part 1), using the term “heart” in place of Light. His theory of Light as the all-apprehending substance seems to be greatly influenced by Ishrāqí thought.

heart, which refers them to the intellect. The intellect (which has its seat in the brain) identifies these impressions as sense-perceptions and sends them to the imagination, which sends them to the understanding (*mufakkkīra*), whose duty it is to analyse and discriminate such perceptions. When the process of assimilation and discrimination has taken place, some of these perceptions which prove to be interesting to the mind are retained by the memory, the nearest of all faculties to the heart.¹ All the way through, the heart² (the Light) is operating in spite of the different channels through which its energy runs.

Ibnul 'Arabī adds that the distinguishing factor between the heart as the rational principle in Man, and the faculties, *quā* faculties, is rationality (*nutq*), which belongs to the heart *per se*. It is from the energy of the heart that senses and all mental faculties derive their "rational" activities, and the "heart" can very well dispense with them as we have said before.

He goes even a step farther when he says that perceptual situations (*kayfiyyāt maḥsūsa*) can be apprehended by the heart even in the absence of perceptible objects. It "sees" them in itself as copies of the eternal Ideas of the Soul.³ This brings us to the next point.

(b) *Conceptual Knowledge (al 'ilm al taṣawwūrī)*

Being a "realist", Ibnul 'Arabī, like Plato, starts with the assumption that concepts (Plato's universal ideal limits) are *innate* ideas in the soul, i.e. they are *not* generalisations from particular instances. But the phrase "the soul is essentially a knowing substance" needs some explanation. Does Ibnul 'Arabī mean that the soul is already born with these innate ideas, or, as the Sincere Brethren understand it, that ideas are

¹ This is the account given by Ibnul 'Arabī in the *Māhiyyatū'l Qalb*, *op. cit.* foll. 35, 36, which seems to be a literal version of the account given on the same subject by the Sincere Brethren. See Epistle ix.

² "Heart" does not here refer to the physical organ.

³ See *Māhiyyatū'l Qalb*, *op. cit.* fol. 36.

only a *potentiality* in the soul, i.e. that the soul is always ready to grasp the meaning of these universal ideas when, and only when, it is presented with particular instances of them in the external world? Ibnul 'Arabī seems to be more inclined to the former alternative. He speaks of the soul's *forgetting* its eternal knowledge during its temporary association with the body. The so-called *acquired knowledge* is knowledge *remembered* by the soul. Some souls, like those of prophets and saints, never forget their knowledge and never experience that sickness (*marad*) which befalls other souls.¹ His view is somewhat similar to that of Ibn Rushd who believes in the universality of general ideas. Both thinkers hold that these universal ideas are a common property of every human soul, but while Ibnul 'Arabī maintains that they are innate in the human soul, Ibn Rushd believes that the human intellect perceives the general ideas only when it enters into relation with the active Intellect, *in which all* ideas abide. In this sense Ibn Rushd regards the human intellect as *potentially* knowing. In itself it is *passive*, but it becomes active through its contact with the active Intellect.

What is meant by conceptual thinking, therefore, according to Ibnul 'Arabī, is *relating* these already existing concepts to each other. Even "relation" itself in its universality is one of these concepts. Ibnul 'Arabī reduces all conceptual knowledge—all knowledge of the external world—to a simple relation between the already knowing soul (or its concepts) and objects of the external world on the one hand, and to a process of relating these concepts themselves, on the other. For example, to formulate the proposition "a body is standing" is to relate in mind the notion of "body" with that of "standing", both of which are unchangeable ideas. The relation between them, taken in its universality, is also an unchangeable concept. Even the particular relation (*al nisbah al shakhsīyyah*), i.e. that this body is standing *now*, is

¹ See *I'ut.* II, pp. 912-13. Cf. *Risālah*, publ. by Palacios, *op. cit.* p. 161. Ibnul 'Arabī expresses the same idea using Ishrāqī terms. *Fut.* II, p. 360.

unchangeable, in the sense that it (itself) cannot be asserted of any other body to which it does not belong.¹ If we say that the particular relation *does* change, since the standing body might move the next moment, Ibnul 'Arabí would answer that the body has entered into another relation altogether, and the previous relation has *not changed*. There are, therefore, four elements in all conceptual thinking:

- (i) Abstract relation (*msbah mutlaqa*).
- (ii) The object to which a relation is made (*al mansúb ilayhi*).
- (iii) The attribute related (*al msbah*).
- (iv) The particular relation (*al msbah al shakhsiyyah*).

The greatest hindrance to clear conceptual thinking, Ibnul 'Arabí says, is the understanding, because it is always accompanied by images which tend to *limit* the universality of the universal concepts we have just explained.²

(c) *What Ibnul 'Arabí means by Desire (shahwah)
and Will (irādah)*

Ibnul 'Arabí draws a distinction between "desire" and "will" by defining the former as the mere striving towards the gratification of some natural appetite or other. This striving is usually determined by the nature of its object. Will, on the other hand, for him, means a divine and a spiritual power whose object is never an existing one (i.e. a concrete object in the external world). Craving for food would be called a desire by Ibnul 'Arabí, but the longing of the soul to understand perfection, beauty, or harmony or to have a vision of God, etc. is an act of will. He intellectualises "will" to such an extent that a truly volitional state must be absolutely free from all pleasurable and displeasing feelings or ideas. To feel an inclination towards the contemplation of beauty or perfection, or to long for a vision of God, being, at the same time moved by a pleasurable idea or feeling about a possible

¹ See *Fut.* I, p. 53.

² See *Fut.* II, p. 39, l. 18.

happiness which might ensue from such contemplation or vision, is no will at all, but a *desire for an object*. Will does not concern itself with concrete objects, neither does desire with abstract ideas.¹

This interesting theory of will has an important bearing on what the Sūfis call the mystic yearning or longing for their Beloved (God). Ibnul Fārid and Ibnul 'Arabī have talked about Absolute Beauty and Absolute Perfection as being the object (not in a concrete sense) of their love and contemplation, but no one except a mystic can fully understand what love in abstraction or contemplation of the Absolute means. It is very doubtful whether in normal mental life we ever have volitional states which are not conditioned by an idea or a feeling or even an image, or which are *absolutely* void of any concomitant pleasure or pain. A vacant state of volition with no object (particular object) and no motive whatever is only possible for mystics.

Ibnul 'Arabī concludes by saying that it is possible to have *spiritual* objects of desire and to experience, when such desires are fulfilled, a form of pleasure very much similar in its nature to that experienced on the gratification of *material* desires.² But such a state, he adds, is experienced by few.

(d) *The Meaning and Place of Imagination (khayāl) in Ibnul 'Arabī's Psychology and his Theory of Dreams*

Unfortunately the term *khayāl* is used very vaguely by Ibnul 'Arabī to mean any intermediary between two stages. He calls the "Blindness" (*al 'Ama'*) *khayāl*³ because it is an intermediate stage between the absolute Essence and the Phenomenal World. Mental images are *khayāl* because they are an intermediate stage between the spiritual and the visible world. Dreams are *khayāl* because they are a stage between the real and the phenomenal life. Mirror-images are *khayāl*

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 254.

² This strongly suggests the origin of what the Sūfis unanimously call *dhawq* (taste) in mystical experience.

³ *Fut.* II, p. 410.

because they are a species of their own: they are neither concrete objects nor abstract ideas. Gabriel, whom the Prophet is said to have seen in the form of *Diḥyah*, is *khayāl* and so on. The use of the term in this wide sense makes it exceedingly difficult to know what Ibnul 'Arabī *really* means by *khayāl*. Is it possible to say that all these kinds of *khayāl* are objects of the faculty we call imagination? Is it the same faculty that forms mental images, of horses and men, say, and *projects* (in the external world) images such as that which seemed to Mohammed like "*Diḥyah*", and fabricates mirror-images? Ibnul 'Arabī does not say so, but we can only conclude that this is what he means. Another very loose sense in which he uses the term *khayāl* is that he seems to mean by it anything that serves as a symbol for a hidden meaning or reality. The universe is *khayāl* in this sense. Dreams (at least some dreams) are *khayāl*, for both the universe and (some) dreams are symbols of hidden realities.

We must, therefore, be on our guard in understanding what Ibnul 'Arabī says about *khayāl*, and we must also distinguish between at least two different kinds of it:

(1) The psychological kind, i.e. mental images which are only seen *in* and have no existence *apart from* a mind. Under this category we may class dreams, illusions and ordinary normal images of waking life.

(2) What we might call the metaphysical kind, which Ibnul 'Arabī has no reason to call *khayāl*.

With the second we shall not concern ourselves here. The first is divided by Ibnul 'Arabī into two kinds: (a) separable (*munfaṣil*), which is seen in the plane of the imagination (*ḥaḍratu'l khayāl*) as having an external corporeality, like the form of Gabriel seen by Mohammed, and the serpent which was seen in place of Moses' staff.¹ For Ibnul 'Arabī this is a different type of imagination from optic illusions (understood in a strict psychological sense);² (b) inseparable (*muttaṣil*), by

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 411.

² Although I cannot see any difference between them.

which Ibnul 'Arabí seems to mean ordinary mental images. This he divides into two more sub-classes: (*b'*) images which are consciously recalled to the mind by the process of *takbayyul*, and (*b''*) images which come to the mind of their own accord under certain conditions, e.g. in dreams.

The peculiarity of Ibnul 'Arabí's theory of *kbayāl* is that it is not purely psychological. *Kbayālāt* are not only mind-dependent products which have no being *in themselves* as a psychologist would say. There is a definite place allotted to them in Ibnul 'Arabí's (and even Ghazālí's) theory of being. Some *kbayālāt*, e.g. the separable ones, belong, he says, to the "essential Presence" (*al ḥaḍrah al dhātīyyah*) and are always ready to receive "meanings" (*ma'ānī*) and "spirits" (*arwāḥ*), whatever this may mean.¹ They are forms in which Reality reveals itself to the human mind, and Ibnul 'Arabí even regards them as higher forms than those of the sensible world.

(e) *Ibnul 'Arabí's Theory of Dreams*

It would be desirable to recall what has been said about the inward "eye" of the heart (*'ayn al baṣīrah*), for it is, according to Ibnul 'Arabí, the only key to the spiritual world in Man's possession. Revelations and inspirations, which we have hitherto explained as springing directly from the heart, are sometimes, Ibnul 'Arabí says, given to the mystic or the prophet in the form of a dream. This is the veridical dream (*al ru'yā al ṣādiqa*) but there are other dreams which belong to a different class altogether.

Ibnul 'Arabí holds that the faculty of imagination is always active whether in waking life or in sleep. During waking hours this faculty is too distracted by sense impressions to do its work properly, but in sleep, when the senses and other faculties are in a state of rest, the imagination fully awakes. Sometimes it acts on images connected with ordinary incidents of the everyday life of the individual and presents them to the "inward eye" of the heart, which reflects them and

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 411.

magnifies them like a mirror. In this way ordinary dreams are caused. They are just associations of ideas and images connecting themselves with some objects of desire.

But sometimes the "Guarded Table" (by which Ibnul 'Arabî means the Universal Soul) reveals itself, with all it contains of archetypal ideas, to the rational soul of Man.¹ The imagination seizes such ideas and acts upon them even in such a state. The heart (now in immediate contact with the Universal Soul) becomes, Ibnul 'Arabî says, like "a running, yet undefiled stream wherein are reflected illuminated objects of all descriptions".² The person to whom such a dream is revealed only sees the reflections in this stream, which are symbols of realities which lie behind them.

Ibnul 'Arabî holds that although such dreams are veridical, they must be interpreted because they are symbolic. It is the imagination that supplies the symbols, and we must not take symbols for realities. When the Prophet saw milk in a dream, he only saw a symbol. The reality behind it was "knowledge".

Ibnul 'Arabî gives us one more kind of veridical dreams in which there are no symbols. Here the imagination does not interfere. The "heart" reflects directly the spiritual impressions (*ma'ânî ghaybiyyah*) before the imagination can read into them any symbolic meaning. Dreams of this kind need no interpretation. They are revelations of the Real itself, and they correspond in every detail to the things seen (later) in the external world. To this class of dreams belong some kinds of *wahy* (revelation) and *ilhām*, inspiration, which spring directly from the individual soul. If Ibnul 'Arabî calls the Universal Soul the revealer, he simply means the Universal Soul as *manifested* in the individual soul.

¹ What Ibnul 'Arabî means here, as I have repeatedly said, is that the rational soul of Man which is a mode of Universal Soul is revealing itself to itself.

² *Mābiyyatu'l Qalb*, op. cit. fol. 45, part II.

(f) *The Creative Power of the Mystic*¹

It is misleading to apply the term "create" to God in a pantheistic doctrine like that of Ibnul 'Arabí, but more misleading still to apply it, as Ibnul 'Arabí does, to "gnostics" (*al 'ārifīn*). Gnostics create, he says, by means of a mysterious power which he calls *al himmah*² (will-power), which can produce changes and create objects *in the external world* wherever it is concentrated;³ a theory which is very similar to the materialisation of spirits in modern spiritualism. In his *Risālatu'l Quds*⁴ Ibnul 'Arabí recalls many occasions on which he used to summon, at will, the spirit of his Shaykh Yūsuf al Kūmí⁵ whenever he wanted him, and how the Shaykh used to present himself before Ibnul 'Arabí and answer his questions. The illustrious Ṣadru'd' Dīn of Qūniya, who was a personal disciple of Ibnul 'Arabí, also says that "our Shaykh Ibnul 'Arabí had the power to meet the spirit of any dead Prophet or Saint, either by causing the spirit to descend to this world and seeing it incorporated in a 'similitudinary form' (*sāra mithālīyyah*) resembling the sensible form of the person wanted, or by causing the spirit to appear in his dreams, or by disembodying himself and meeting the spirit".⁶ This was no

¹ This part should be read in conjunction with what has been said in the chapter on the Logos about the Perfect Man being the cause of the universe.

² The term *himmah* is used by Ibnul 'Arabí to mean the divine energy in the heart of the "Perfect Man". He also calls it *sidq* (true intuition; see *Mawāqī' al Nuḥūm*, p. 83); and its power to produce effective changes in the external world is called *taṣarruf* (control). See *Fus.* pp. 233-4.

Ibnul 'Arabí divides *himmah* into two kinds, inborn (*ḥibillāh*) and acquired, but adds that some Ṣūfis regard all *himmah* as inborn. Early in his life Ibnul 'Arabí explained *himmah* as a "cause" at the occurrence of which God creates things—not that the *himmah* itself is the creator of things (see *Mawāqī'*, p. 84). He also regarded *himmah* as something like a hypnotic power or auto-suggestion (see *Mawāqī'*, p. 85). He universalised *himmah* and regarded it as a latent power which is the cause of every movement and every change in the world (*Mawāqī'*, p. 85).

³ *Fus.* p. 140. Cf. *Fus.* p. 304.

⁴ Parts of this *Risālah* are translated by A. Palacios in his book *Muhyiddin*.

⁵ A personal disciple of the celebrated Abū Madyan was one of Ibnul 'Arabí's early spiritual masters at Seville.

⁶ Quoted from "Life of Muhiyyu'd Dīn Ibnul 'Arabí", published by Prof. R. A. Nicholson, *J.R.A.S.* 1906, p. 816.

peculiarity of Ibnul 'Arabí alone. Other Şûfis have said the same about themselves.

To understand what Ibnul 'Arabí means by creating anything or materialising any spirit by means of the *himmah*, recourse must be made to what he calls the "Five *Ḥaḍarāt*" (planes of being). Each of these *ḥaḍras* reflects, like a mirror, the one above it. The *ḥaḍrah* of the sensible world, e.g. *ḥaḍrat al ḥiss*, is regarded as a reflection of the higher plane of similitudes (*ḥaḍrat al mithāl*), which is a reflection of the one still higher, i.e. the plane of the spirits (*ḥaḍrat al arwāḥ*) and so on, until we reach things which are reflections of the Absolute Essence itself.¹ But these *ḥaḍras* (planes) are not *separate* spheres each of which is absolutely and fundamentally different from the other. We may speak of a man as being manifested in a sensible form in the external world, and in a spiritual form in the world of spirits, but this does not imply that his body (physical form) is essentially and fundamentally different from his spirit (spiritual form). Neither does it mean that the "Plane of Spirits" is essentially and fundamentally different from that of sensible objects. Once the meaning of these *ḥaḍras* is grasped, many obscure points of Ibnul 'Arabí's theory become more intelligible. Nothing is *really* created anew either by God or Man, but things may be said to be *preserved*² by God in one or other of these "Five Planes". Creating, therefore, in the sense of *preserving what already exists* in one or other or all of these *ḥaḍras*, may be attributed to Man. The heart of Man (the Perfect Man) is a centre for all the divine activities. It reflects, like a mirror, all the forms in which Reality reveals itself. By concentrating on the form of anything in one or more of these *ḥaḍras* by means of the *himmah* (which is a power of the heart), the mystic has a perfect control over that thing, and through this control the thing is *preserved* in one

¹ Cf. Qāshānī's *Com. on the Fus.* p. 166, and Gibb's *History of Ottoman Poetry*, I, pp. 54-8.

² See *Fus.* pp. 140-1.

ḥaḍrah or another so long as the *concentration* of the *ḥimmah* is maintained. This seems to be all that Ibnul 'Arabī means by the creative activity of the mystic. The heart of the mystic projects through the agency of the imagination what is reflected in it, in which case the object on which the *ḥimmah* is concentrated appears to have externality, but no one can see it in the external world except a mystic.¹

The difference between the creation of God and that of Man (the Perfect Man) on this theory is that God's "creations" are preserved at *all times* and in *all* the *ḥaḍras* because God never becomes forgetful of His "creations", while those of Man are preserved only at one time or other, and in one *ḥaḍrah* or other, and never in *all* the *ḥaḍras*. As soon as Man becomes forgetful of his "creations", they disappear, not from existence altogether, for nothing disappears from existence, but from the *ḥaḍras* of which Man has become forgetful.

But even if this is all that Ibnul 'Arabī means by the creative activity of the mystic, he certainly seems to have made a fundamental mistake through confusing the subjective with the objective. If the "planes of being" (the *ḥaḍras*) are merely *subjective* and if the "forms" revealed in them are also subjective, in what way then is it possible, even for a mystic, to preserve, as Ibnul 'Arabī says, such forms and give them, at times, *external existence*? It is not like recalling mental images and preserving them *in a mind*: it is "preserving" what has existence *outside* the place of the *ḥimmah*.²

There is, however, another way of explaining this theory without introducing the subject of the *ḥaḍras*. If under certain mystical conditions, particularly the one called *fanā*, the mystic realises his essential unity with the One who is the sole Creator (in Ibnul 'Arabī's sense), and if Ibnul 'Arabī allows all the divine Attributes which are predicable of God to be predicated of mystics in such a state, why not, then, say

¹ This is the *ḥayāl munfaṣīl* explained above.

² *Fus.* p. 140.

that the mystic whose spirituality has been fully realised actually does create in the sense God Himself creates on Ibnul 'Arabî's view, i.e. simply to cause things which already exist to be manifested in the external world? The mystics then would be something like media through which the creative activity of God finds an expression. This is quite a possible attitude for a mystic to take, and it would account for such miracles as Christ's creating birds from clay and Bāyazīd's bringing to life a dead ant and so on.¹ In fact Ibnul 'Arabî himself comes as near as possible to this view when he says "that we know that the heavenly bodies respond (*tanfa'il*) to the *himam* of the souls when they are in the state of unity (with the One), and we have seen that ourselves".² And in explaining Christ's miracle of creating birds from clay Ibnul 'Arabî says: "When the soul attains a high degree of spirituality it reflects things in the higher spheres and becomes receptive of the divine 'Breath' (*al Nafkeb*). Christ did not create birds from no birds. The birds were already in existence—but not whole. The souls of the birds were in the divine Breath and the bodies were in Nature; the 'word' of Christ united the souls to the bodies."³ Ibnul 'Arabî concludes by saying that although the Gnostics possess this mysterious power they call *himmah*, a true Gnostic would refrain from exercising it for two reasons: (*a*) he realises his state as a mere servant of God (*'abd*) and therefore he prefers to leave creation to his Lord; (*b*) he knows that the *mutaṣarrif* and the *mutaṣarraf fihî* are essentially one.⁴ Ibnul 'Arabî mentions the two Shaykhs Abu'l Su'ūd Ibnu'l Shibl and Abû Madyan as belonging to this class of mystics who abandoned *taṣarruf* in disdain.⁵ But a Ṣūfî may exercise his *taṣarruf*, Ibnul 'Arabî adds, if God bids him to do so. This was the case with 'Abdul Qādir al Jīlānī.⁶

¹ *Fus.* pp. 263, 271.

² *Fus.* p. 304.

³ *Mawāqif al Nuġm*, by Ibnul 'Arabî, pp. 126-7.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 233.

⁵ See *Fus.* p. 235, and *Fus.* I, p. 243, l. 18, and p. 304, l. 12 from foot, etc.

⁶ *Fus.* I, p. 262.

§ III

MYSTICISM AND THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF
MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE(a) *Goal of Mysticism according to Older Ṣūfīs*

Some aspects of the question of the ultimate end of Moham-medan Mysticism have already been worked out by some students of Ṣūfism,¹ but so far as I am aware, very little has been published on the subject in connection with the pan-theistic school of Ṣūfīs to which Ibnul 'Arabī belongs. What can the ultimate end of the Ṣūfism of a pantheist be?

It is generally assumed that the end of all the mystic life of a Ṣūfī is to attain to a "union" with God. Ṣūfīs unanimously agree in calling this union by the highly ambiguous term *fanā'* (annihilation or passing away) which expresses the *negative* aspect of the mystical experience; the positive aspect being expressed by the complementary term *baqā'* (enduring or continuing).²

Earlier treatises on Ṣūfism, like Sarrāj's *Luma'* and Qushayrī's *Risālah*³ give us different definitions of the terms *fanā'* and *baqā'* by different Ṣūfīs. From such definitions we observe the following:

(1) That most of them are either ethical or psychological in character; they do not aspire to give us a metaphysical theory of the experience of *fanā'*. They are mostly statements about a *subjective* experience and *not* a theory about the *objective reference* of such experience.

(2) That both Sarrāj and Qushayrī seem to have foreseen the danger of slipping off from a *description* of a subjective

¹ See for instance Prof. R. A. Nicholson's Article in the *J.R.A.S.* 1913, pp. 55-68.

² Ibnul 'Arabī insists that the two terms *fanā'* and *baqā'* should always be qualified with the prepositions "from" (*an*) and "in" (*fi*) respectively. What he is driving at, as we shall see later, is that the terms *fanā'* and *baqā'* are *relative*—absolute *fanā'* is meaningless. See *Fut.* II, p. 675.

³ See *Luma'*, ed. by R. A. Nicholson, pp. 213-14, 426-7, 341, and the *Risālah* of Qushayrī, Cairo, ed. pp. 42-3. Sarrāj died 378/988 and Qushayrī 465/1072.

experience into the formulation of a philosophical theory based on it, such as pantheism and incarnation, etc. But even such an orthodox Sūfī as Qushayrī himself could not avoid the danger against which he was warning. He sometimes uses language which lends itself readily to pantheistic interpretation.¹ Comparatively early Sūfis like Bāyazīd, Junayd, and Hallāj made this slip, but in spite of their most strikingly pantheistic utterances² it seems evident that there was no conscious effort made by them, as was by a Sūfī like Ibnul ‘Arabī, to convert Ṣūfism into Pantheism or any other system of philosophy.

(3) Most of these definitions agree that in the experience called *fanā’*, consciousness of the external world and of mental life is very dimly felt and in some cases completely lost.

(4) That *fanā’* is a gradual process starting from “passing away” from the worldly desires of the animal soul, and a gradual loss of self-consciousness, and ending with a state of absolute absorption in the contemplation of God.

(5) That Ṣūfis, up to the second half of the fifth century A.H. who defined *fanā’* in such a way as to imply *ḥulūl* or *ittiḥād* (*einswerden*), meant only to describe their own personal experience, not intending thereby to formulate a theory about the ultimate nature of Reality as Ibnul ‘Arabī did.

(6) That the ultimate aim of Ṣūfism was either purely ethical or purely psychological or both, i.e.

(i) that they aimed at either a complete resignation to the

¹ See his *Risālah*, p. 43, where he describes the three stages of *fanā’*.

² Cf. Dhul Nūn’s definition of *Tawḥīd* given in *Luma’*, p. 28, with that of Junayd on p. 29. The former is mainly based on the Attribute of Difference (*al mukhālafah lil ḥawādith*), the latter is cast in a purely pantheistic form. It runs as follows: “*Tawḥīd* is the return of Man to his origin, so that he will be as he was before he came to being.” He also says: “*Tawḥīd* is the absolute emancipation (i.e. of Man) from all ‘temporal vestiges’ (*rusūm zamāniyyah*) and the going back into the spaciousness of infinity.” *Tawḥīd* for him was the “annihilation” of the individual “self” and the return of the temporal to the everlasting. To Junayd is also attributed the following saying which is remarkably pantheistic: “They (the Sūfis) are (exist) but without being (of their own) and they depart (in the state of *fanā’*) without (actual) departing” (*kānū bilā kaww wa bānū bilā bawn*), *Luma’*, p. 33.

Absolute Will of God, regarding it as the Prime Mover of all that takes place in the world; or

- (ii) absolute abandonment of personal desires and ridding themselves of evil characteristics which pertain to the world of Nature. This is the *fanā'ul ma'āsī* and *baqā'ul tā'ah* (passing away of sin and the endurance of obedience); or
- (iii) the abandonment of consciousness of "self" and the concentration on contemplation of God alone.

So, *fanā'* explained by these early Ṣūfīs is another word for *abandonment*, and *fanā'* of "self" simply means abandonment of consciousness of "self" or abandonment of *some* attributes or qualities of "self". Sarrāj directs the following argument against Ṣūfīs who believed in *ḥulūl* (fusion or incarnation). "It is not a question", he says, "of passing away from human attributes or becoming one with God: this is infidelity. It is nothing but a full *recognition* of the absolute Power and Will of God.¹ God does not descend to the heart of Man—what descends to the heart of Man is faith in Him and belief in His unity (*taḥḥid*) and the love of remembering Him (*dhikr*). God's essence and attributes are different from those of human beings, so how can fusion or incarnation be possible?... You can no more pass away from your humanity than 'black' can go forth from a black object. Human *qualities* may change, but they are always replaced by other human qualities."²

Sarrāj's argument seems to imply that some Ṣūfīs against whom he was directing his attack must have held that the ultimate aim of Ṣūfism was to become united with God (in the sense of *ḥulūl*)—but even this is different, as we shall see later, from Ibnul 'Arabī's view. Qushayrī on the other hand gives us an excellent analysis of *fanā'* and *baqā'* as psychological states, i.e. a mere replacement of some mental states by others.³ According to him *fanā'* and *baqā'* are two aspects

¹ See his *Luma'*, p. 433.

² *Luma'*, pp. 426-7.

³ *Risālah*, p. 42.

of a most minute analysis of the soul; the concentration on the divine and spiritual and the abandonment of the phenomenal. Such concentration, he says, might result in total absorption in the object of contemplation, and even a total loss of consciousness of "self", but this is no annihilation of "self". It is like a lover being absorbed in his beloved.¹ Such was the attitude taken by Şûfis before Ibnul 'Arabî's time towards so vital a question as that of *fanā*. The utmost they asserted was a theory of incarnation or fusion as Hallāj did. The "divine" and the "human" were believed by some to be united in the inarticulate and deeply emotional experience. With such Şûfis we cannot enter into argument; we have either to believe what they say or throw it overboard as mere nonsense. It was left to Ibnul 'Arabî and his school to put the matter into a *theoretical* form and to give us an account of it which is not wholly descriptive or based on experience. With Ibnul 'Arabî, as with Plotinus, "the possibility of the experience is inferred from the system, not the propositions of the system from the experience. Not being properly a kind of cognition, the mystical experience can become the ground of no inference".² It was pantheism with which Ibnul 'Arabî started, but his pantheism soon merged into mysticism. Trying to bridge what seemed to him an unreal gulf between the One and the Many, and failing to do so *in thought*, he finds in the mystical experience alone what appears to him to be a complete solution of the conflict. Pantheism of Ibnul 'Arabî's kind almost invariably leads to mysticism. When on the other hand Hallāj cried out "*Anā'l Haqq*" (I am the Real), he was giving vent to a strong religious sentiment which made him feel one with the One he loved. We may say that on his experience Hallāj based a theory of *Hulūl*. But when Ibnul 'Arabî talks of a mystical union with God he means a "state" in which an *already existing union* is being *realised* or verified. The *mystic does not*

¹ Qushayrî's *Risālah*, pp. 32-3.

² Whittaker's *Neo-Platonists*, p. 101.

become God, for there is *no* becoming on Ibnul 'Arabī's theory, *he is* essentially one with God in the sense everything else is. What the mystic *knows*, he experiences here. The divine is already there: *it is you*: not even an *element*, as Ḥallāj calls it, in your nature, but an *aspect*. Ibnul 'Arabī himself repudiates the idea that a mystic passes away from his own "self" or *becomes* God. He cannot be contemptuous enough of people who make such assertions.

(b) *The Meanings of "fanā'"*

According to Ibnul 'Arabī *fanā'* may mean either of two things:

(i) *fanā'* in a mystical sense, by which he means the "passing away" of ignorance and the "remaining" (*baqā'*) of infallible knowledge (gained by intuition) of the essential oneness of the Whole. The mystic does not pass away from his "self" but he *realises* its essential non-existence as a form.

(ii) *I'ānā'* in a metaphysical sense, by which Ibnul 'Arabī means the "passing away" of the "forms" of the Phenomenal World and the continuance of the One universal Substance. This is, as Mr Whinfield puts it, the eternal process of "phenomena being constantly annihilated in the universal Noumenon";¹ the new creation (*al khalq al jadīd*) explained before. It is summed up in Ibnul 'Arabī's own words: "the disappearance of a form is its *fanā'* at the moment of the manifestation (*tajallī*) of God in another form."²

The mystical *fanā'*, he says, is imperfect. The mystic realises that he, as a form, has no existence *per se*, but, owing to the very nature of the form he cannot completely pass away from it. How can it be possible even for a mystic, he asks, "to die to self", and be at the same time conscious of God as the all-embracing Reality? Consciousness itself means persistence of "self".

¹ *Gulshani Rāz*, Introduction, p. xiii.

² *Fus.* p. 230.

Ibnul 'Arabí makes a fundamental distinction between two mystical states which, he believes, have been confused by other mystics:

(1) The passing away from all traces and characteristics of "self" or "personality" (*al fanā' 'an al rasm ḥālan*). This state is similar to sleep. "The mystic is neither with his 'self' nor with his 'Lord': he is asleep: he is ignorant."

(2) The passing away of "self" in a state of intuitive knowledge in which the essential unity of the Whole is revealed. This is the aspect of the mystical experience which Ibnul 'Arabí emphasises. It is *knowledge* of an infallible nature that Ibnul 'Arabí is after. To say that I have become God or died to self in any real sense is ignorance, and to see your "self" *alone* in a mystical experience is polytheism. The perfect mystic therefore is one who sees *both* God and "self" in the mystical experience, both by mystical knowledge and feeling (*'ilman wa ḥālan*) and sees his "self" by mystical knowledge alone (*'ilman lā ḥālan*),¹ i.e. the perfect mystic is the one who recognises both Essence and "form" but realises their essential unity and the absolute non-existence of the form. This is the most perfect *fanā'* a mystic can attain in this life according to Ibnul 'Arabí: the *real fanā'* is attained after death when the form completely disappears.

Such a view is quite in harmony with Ibnul 'Arabí's metaphysical theory of Reality. Mysticism is the consummation of the mystic's quest for true knowledge of the Real. It is, as with Plotinus, "grasping the Eternal in immediate contact in a union in which the particular soul realises its affiliation to the *Noûs*".² The "soul contemplates the One not as something strange and external, but as in itself and rests in it inasmuch as it loses itself in complete union with it—a condition beyond all reason and science".³ It is extraordinary that Ibnul 'Arabí's mystical conclusions should coincide, as we have seen, with those of Plotinus in spite of

¹ See *Mawāqī' al Nujūm*, pp. 29-30.

² Cf. *Enn.* vi, 8, 11; i, 2, 6.

³ *Enneads*, vi, 9; v, 5.

the difference between their metaphysical systems. Of the two, Ibnul 'Arabī's is the more logical. The particular soul which contemplates the One as itself or in itself never left the One on Ibnul 'Arabī's view. According to Plotinus, it is but a distant emanation or reflection from the One, yet in a mystical experience it realises its essential unity with the One; two different statements which are hard to reconcile.

(c) "*Fanā'*" as a Gradual Process

According to Ibnul 'Arabī *fanā'* is a gradual process consisting of seven stages in which the mystic knows by intuition (*dhawq*) his real place in relation to God. These stages are as follows:

(1) The passing away from sin (*al fanā' 'an al ma'āṣī*) by which the older Ṣūfīs meant the abandonment of all sins, but which means, on Ibnul 'Arabī's pantheistic theory, that in such a state the mystic realises that all actions (as actions and *not as objects* of moral judgments) are right, since all actions are God's. The mystic, he says, recognises no ethical criteria in this stage. He is in the Presence of the "Pure Light" (*ḥaḍrat al Nūr al Maḥḍ*), which is the Pure Good (*al Khayr al Maḥḍ*) where moral obligations have no application. To regard your actions as belonging to yourself is to be in the Presence of the "Pure Darkness" (*ḥaḍrat al Zulmah al Maḥḍah*) and to believe in polytheism (*shirk*).¹ Ibnul 'Arabī is a thorough Antinomian here.

(2) The passing away from all actions whatever. In this stage the mystic realises that God alone is the absolute and the only *agent* in the universe. Ibnul 'Arabī attacks both the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites on the question of human freedom. Neither the former, who believe that Man is an absolute free agent, nor the latter, who hold that Man is a mere instrument through which actions are done by God, are right. The *real agent* on Ibnul 'Arabī's view is God *Himself*.

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 675.

(3) The passing away from attributes and qualities of contingent beings, by which he means that the mystic realises in such a state that the so-called attributes and qualities of contingent being belong really to God. "To God alone belong 'hearing' and 'sight' and all the realities of the attributes of Man" (*jamī' a'yān ṣifāt al-'abd*).¹ "God sees Himself in you through your own eye and, therefore, He really sees Himself: this is the meaning of the passing away of attributes." He also says: "The true mystic is he who regards (sees) God from God in God and through the eye of God: He who regards (sees) God from God in God but not through the eye of God is not a gnostic (*'ārif*), and he who regards (sees) God neither from God nor in God, but expects to see Him with his own eye, he is ignorant and 'veiled'."²

Ibnul 'Arabī denies having ever known any person who experienced this stage of *fanā'* but he gives us two characteristics which distinguish it from any other stage: (a) that the mystic who has experienced such a stage never regains consciousness of his own personality or of anything other than God; (b) that all the senses of the mystic merge into one sense or faculty by means of which he perceives and apprehends everything.³

(4) Passing away from one's own personality (*dhāt*) by which he means that the mystic realises in such a state the non-existence of his *phenomenal* "self" and the "endurance" (*baqā'*) of the unchangeable unperishable substance which is its essence.

(5) Passing away from the whole world, i.e. the cessation of contemplating the phenomenal aspect of the world and the realisation of the real aspect which underlies the phenomenal.

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 676, l. 9.

² *Fut.* pp. 198, 147; cf. his *Al Ajwibab al Lā'iqab*. Loth Cat. 659¹, fol. 4.

³ *Fut.* II, p. 677.

(6) Passing away from all that is “other than God”, even from the very act of “passing away”. One of the conditions of this stage is that the mystic must cease to be conscious of himself as a contemplator. It is God Himself that contemplates and is contemplated. He is seen in every one of His infinite “states” (*shu’ûn*), i.e. manifestations.

(7) The passing away from all the attributes of God and their “relations”, i.e. the contemplation of God as the Essence of the universe “rather than the ‘Cause’ of it as the Philosophers say”. The mystic then does not regard the universe as an effect of a cause but “as a Reality in Appearance” (*Ḥaqq fi Zuhûr*). He realises the meaninglessness of causality and such divine Names as the Creator, the Designer, the Giver and so on. This last stage is the ultimate goal of all the mystical endeavours and training of a pantheistic Sûfî like Ibnul ‘Arabî. It is the fullest realisation of the essential oneness of all things, and this alone sums up his whole mystical philosophy. I will conclude this part with the following remarks:

(1) That the stages of *fanā* just described are far too intellectual to be regarded as mystical in the ordinary sense. They should be called stages of a mystical philosophy rather than a mystical experience. Ibnul ‘Arabî himself confesses that he knows of no person, even himself, who experienced some of these stages, e.g. stage (3).

(2) That they sum up what Massignon calls the “gnostic involution”¹ of mystics belonging to Ibnul ‘Arabî’s school. Ibnul ‘Arabî believes in a creative evolution (of a *logical* character as we have already explained). In these stages he takes a homeward journey, retraversing (in an equally logical way) all the stages which the Absolute undergoes in His descent to *our knowledge*. The last of these stages, i.e. (7), is identical with what Ibnul ‘Arabî calls the station of absolute transcendence of the unity (*manzilat tamẓihut tawhîd*).²

¹ See *Encyc. of Islam*, Nos. 29-30, 1925, p. 769.

² *Fut.* II, pp. 767-8.

(3) That in every one of these so-called mystical stages of *fanā'*, the essential unity of being is realised by the mystic in one or other of its numerous aspects, e.g. God as absolute *Law*—or absolute *Will*—or absolute *Essence*, etc., etc.

(4) That to every stage of *fanā'* corresponds a stage of *baqā'*: that which passes away is the phenomenal and that which endures is the real.

(5) That the ultimate goal of Ibnul 'Arabī's mysticism is the attainment of what he calls "true knowledge", which seems to destroy the whole fabric of our knowledge of the external world (conceived as a multiplicity of phenomena) and do away with all Islamic dogmas, theological and ethical.

(6) That *fanā'* and *baqā'* are two *complementary aspects* of one and the same experience in which the real is "seen" to persist, the phenomenal to pass away—*fanā'* is characteristic of all that is "other than God"; *baqā'*, of God alone.¹

(7) That in every one of these stages, one of the "veils", i.e. the characteristics of the so-called Phenomenal World as we know it—all that is called other than God—is removed, and the mystic is brought one step nearer to the Truth. When all the "veils" are lifted up, Reality appears in its absolute nakedness, and absolute freedom of the soul is reached. The mystic is, then, said to have arrived (*wasala*) at his goal wherein lies his happiness. This goal is *not* God, for how can it be God, Ibnul 'Arabī says, and He is the very one that "arrived" at the goal?²

(8) That the supreme happiness of the mystic is in *realising*, by means of mystic intuition, his essential unity with

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 679. Ibnul 'Arabī quotes the Qur'ānic verse, "what ye have is spent, but what God has endures". Qur. xvi, 98.

² Ibnul 'Arabī agrees with the Sūfī who, on being told that such and such a Sūfī is said to have arrived (*wasala*), replied "at Hell"! Ibnul 'Arabī quotes this to show that he does not hold that God is the goal of mystic union.

God. What was for him knowledge of certainty (*‘ilmu’l yaqīn*) is now the very “essence” of certainty (*‘aynu’l yaqīn*), and when he transcends the stage of the duality of knower and known, he reaches the highest stage of mystical life in which he is face to face with the reality of certainty (*ḥaqqu’l yaqīn*).¹

¹ See *Fut.* II, pp. 752-3. Cf. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, by Prof. R. A. Nicholson, p. 247, v. 514 of the Ode of Ibnul Fārid—also footnote 514. The following verse from Ibnul Fārid expresses the idea explained above

“Travelling from knowledge of certainty to the intuition thereof then journeying to the fact thereof where the Truth (or Real) is”

CHAPTER IV

IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S RELIGION—ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

§ I

IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The conclusion reached, in the Section on Ibnul 'Arabí's pantheistic doctrine, was that if a metaphysical system like Ibnul 'Arabí's is to give rise to any form of religion whatever, this religion is logically bound to be of a universal nature, i.e. a mystical and not a theistic religion.

According to this system all "paths" lead to one "straight Path" (*al Ṭarīq al amam*)¹ which leads to God. From the crudest form of idolatry to the most abstract religious philosophy, we find, Ibnul 'Arabí says, beliefs which, when interpreted rightly (pantheistically that is!), are found to be beliefs about God.² Monotheism and polytheism, together with infinite other creeds, are, when interpreted in the light of his theory, nothing but one universal religion. The difference between Monotheism and Polytheism according to him corresponds to the logical difference between the One and the Many. Polytheism is due to the failure of the polytheist to realise the absolute Unity of the *Whole*, through which failure he regards as divisible the ultimately indivisible Being. "In reality", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "there is no partner to God",³ for He is the *'ayn* of everything, including what is called partners. Everything that is worshipped is a

¹ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 8, *al Ṭarīq al amam* which is "the Path of the essential Unity" (*Ṭarīq al Ahādīyyah*).

² Ibnul 'Arabí tries to base this doctrine on the Qur'ānic verse: "For each one of you have we made a religion and a pathway", Qur. v, 52, reading *wa minbājan* (and a pathway) as *wa minba jā'a* (and from it, i.e. this religion, it came). By this religion (*Shir'ah*) he means the one universal religion (his pantheism), but it is obvious that he is violating the language of the Qur'ān and altering the meaning of the verse altogether. See *Fuṣṣ.* p. 405.

³ *Fuṣṣ.* p. 380

form and an aspect of Him,¹ and actually there is nothing that is worshipped except Him: does He not say "and thy Lord has decreed that ye shall not worship other than Him?", a verse which Ibnul 'Arabí interprets as meaning that "thy Lord had said that nothing is actually worshipped except Him".² And so, Ibnul 'Arabí does not reject polytheism, provided that the worshippers of images and idols fully realise that there is a Reality behind the "forms" of their gods, regarding the "forms" as mere *majālī* (theatres) or *wujūh* (aspects) or manifestations of this Reality. Images and idols *in themselves* are, like all other manifestations, empty nothings. Are not, Ibnul 'Arabí asks, the idol-worshippers themselves conscious of the imperfection and helplessness of their Gods when they say "we do not worship them save that they may bring us near to God".³ "The greatest of all idols is God"⁴ from whose unity (*al majmū'*) alone comes the "help" to all helpless creatures,⁵ and all creatures are helpless (as forms).

(a) *The Ways of forming Beliefs about God*

There are three ways in which beliefs regarding the nature of God are formed:

- (i) The way of the follower of a prophet.
- (ii) The way of the philosopher and free-thinker.
- (iii) The way of the gnostic (*al 'ārif*).

The "believer" or follower fashions his beliefs after the manner of his prophet; the thinker bases his on reason; the gnostic—who may be said to have no *definite* belief like the other two—is guided by his immediate perception (*dhawq*) of the Truth. Each of them has a conception in which he

¹ Ibnul 'Arabí adds: "and everything is worshipped *quā* its essence", *Fus.* p. 387.

² *Qur.* xvii. 24. Ibnul 'Arabí has completely altered the original meaning of the verse.

³ *Qur.* xxxix. 4.

⁴ *Fus.* i, p. 317. Ibnul 'Arabí refers to the *Qur'ānic* verse: "'Was it thou who didst this to our gods, O Abraham?" said he. 'Nay, it was this largest of them.'" *Qur.* xxi, 63. By the largest idol mentioned in the verse Ibnul 'Arabí understands God who broke the idols *through the hands of Abraham*. Cf. *Fus.*

p. 87.

⁵ See *Fus.* p. 220.

finds his god "and each will, when the Truth is revealed in the next world, recognise the object of his belief (i.e. his god) in the infinite Being who will then appear in all the forms of belief".¹ Only then will they fully apprehend the meaning of their beliefs when they obtain an immediate "vision" of Reality as it really is. Only then shall we *see* for ourselves, with keenness of sight that will never be dimmed, the One object which reflects itself on the infinite mirrors of our beliefs, and know what the meaning of God's *huwīyyah* (Essence) is. People who believe that God is limited to any particular form will recognise Him in that particular form and no other, and people like the Mu'tazilites who believe in His fulfilment of His threat will not recognise Him in His absolute Mercy which embraces all things, and so on.² Only "gnostics", Ibnul 'Arabī says, will recognise Him in *all* forms of belief in which He will reveal Himself, as they now recognise Him in all His manifestations, for the "gnostics" are the *hay'ālā* of all beliefs.³

The forms of belief in God vary according to the nature of the objects of those beliefs, but any belief which deprives God of His absolute universality or falls short of explaining His full nature as being both a transcendent and an immanent Reality is, according to Ibnul 'Arabī, partial and imperfect. To worship a star or a tree is to worship *a* god who is but a partial manifestation of the *Real* God, but to worship Him in *all* forms is to worship Allah who is the only true object of worship. All other gods are "intelligible objects of beliefs". We create them in our minds (*ilāh bil ja'l*).⁴ Everyone is right in his belief—no matter how partial it is, but wrong in asserting that the object of his belief *is* (when it is not) Allah. Gnostics alone worship the true God whose Name (Allah) is the most universal of all the divine Names.⁵ They are called "the worshippers of time" (*'ubbādu'l waqt*) because they worship God at every "moment" of Time in a

¹ See *Fus.* p. 223.

² See *Fus.* p. 223; cf. p. 456.

³ Cf. *Fus.* p. 199.

⁴ *Fus.* p. 195.

⁵ *Al ismu'l jāmi'*. *Fus.* p. 284.

fresh manifestation.¹ Their position is a peculiar one: they combine the belief of the philosopher who asserts pure transcendence of God with that of the polytheist who asserts pure immanence, for neither transcendence *alone* nor immanence *alone* explains the full nature of Reality. Immanence *alone* leads to a form of polytheism which Ibnul 'Arabí denounces—and transcendence *alone* leads to a duality of God and universe which Ibnul 'Arabí rejects. The only religion left for him is the universal religion which includes all religions and which, peculiarly enough, he identifies with Islam—not the monotheistic Islam of Mohammed but the idealistic monism or pantheism he calls Islam. Islam for Ibnul 'Arabí is not only the religion of Mohammed but the embodiment of *all* religions and beliefs.² He sums up his philosophy of religion in the following verse:

People have formed different beliefs about God,
And I *behold all* that they believe.³

Ibnul 'Arabí arrives at the same conclusion about his universal religion through a different channel. He maintains that "love" is the basis of all forms of worship. To worship is to love the object worshipped. But "love", he goes on to say, is a principle which pervades all beings and binds them together. It is one universal kind although it appears a multiplicity in forms. It is an essential unity: the divine Essence itself. Therefore the highest and the truest object of worship, the highest manifestation (*majlā*) in which God is worshipped, is love.

I swear by the reality of Love that Love is the cause of all love;
Were it not for Love (residing) in the heart, Love (God) would not be worshipped.⁴

¹ *Fus.* p. 392.

² See *Fut.* I, p. 174, about the unity of all religions; and *Fut.* II, p. 369, about the "three rivers" (which stand for the three divine Books: the Gospel, the Pentateuch and the Psalms) drawing their "water" from one big river (the Qur'ān). Cf. *Fut.* I, pp. 345-6.

³ *Fut.* III, p. 175.

⁴ *Fus.* pp. 387, 390. Ibnul 'Arabí refers to the Qur'ānic verse: "Hast thou seen him who takes his lust (which he understands as 'love', which happens to be one of the meanings of the word *hawā*) for his god." Qur. xxv, 45.

(b) *The Predetermination of Beliefs*

According to Ibnul 'Arabí we are born into the world with already fixed and predetermined beliefs, which, like everything else in Ibnul 'Arabí's universe, obey their necessary and unchangeable laws. Beliefs are eternal potentialities which become actualities in this world. They are determined by, and vary according to the nature (*isti'dād*: capacity) of the individuals,¹ which is, itself, fixed and predetermined. The monotheist and the pantheist, the gnostic and the agnostic, the theist and the atheist, the believer and the free-thinker, are so from eternity, and their beliefs are determined by *their own nature*. This, Ibnul 'Arabí says, is what Junayd meant by saying "the colour of water is the colour of the vessel which contains it".² The part that God plays in the matter is that of an Omniscient Being who *knows* from eternity what every individual belief is going to be, but even His knowledge is determined by the nature of the beliefs and that of the people to whom they belong. Commenting on the Qur'ānic verse, "Verily, God is not unjust to His servants",³ Ibnul 'Arabí says: "I (i.e. God) did not ordain polytheism which dooms them to misery, and then demand of them what lay not in their power to perform. No, I dealt with them only according as I knew them, and I knew them only by what *they 'gave'* me from themselves, of what they themselves really are. Hence if there is any wrong, they are the wrongdoers. I said to them nothing except what my Essence decreed that I should say to them, and my Essence is known to me as it is. . . . It is mine to say and it is for them to obey or not to obey."⁴

Such is the religion of Ibnul 'Arabí. Rigid and static as it seems, it contains some of the noblest ideas a philosophy of religion can offer us. Its universality alone is commendable. It is not a religion with no ultimate goal whatever. Its ultimate goal is the deification of Man through realising the

¹ *Fus.* p. 216.³ Qur. III, 178.² *Fus.* p. 456.⁴ *Fus.* p. 237.

best that is in him and through comprehending his essential unity with the One Reality which is the All. Its ethical end is no less important. It is the full recognition of the Principle of Love—for God is Love—which pervades and unites the Whole. In this religion God is impersonal, but those who are incapable of conceiving Him as such may worship Him in any form they please, *provided* they know what the *real* object of their worship is. To worship the Real God is not to mention Him by tongue or remember Him by heart but to *contemplate* Him in everything, including yourself.

§ II

ETHICS AND THEODICY

(a) *Determination and Free Will*

This vexed question, which was for centuries the main bone of contention among Muslim theologians ever since Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’ and ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd’, was never, up to the time of Ibnul ‘Arabī, settled satisfactorily on purely ethical grounds. The theologians of that period were absolutely unable to consider a problem of this nature on its own merits as an ethical problem, leaving out of account the religious element, which is by far the least interesting. Ibnul ‘Arabī seems to have suffered from the same cause; indeed his solution is more unsatisfactory and the paradoxes he reaches are more glaring. Strictly speaking, the question of “Free Will” should never trouble a pantheistic Ṣūfī like Ibnul ‘Arabī. He believes in a mystical religion and a mystical God who is the source of all things and the ultimate *doer* of all actions. How can moral obligation have a place in such a system? Who is morally responsible and before whom is anybody responsible when the “judge” and the “judged” are one? Ibnul ‘Arabī finds it inevitable that he should deny moral obligation in the strict ethical sense. He does not explicitly say so, but his denial is expressed in a more constructive form in the account he gives

¹ The first died in 131/748; the second in 144/761.

us of his own view on human liberty. This runs as follows. Man is responsible for his own actions, and the maker of his own fate and destiny—not that he is a free agent in an ethical sense, i.e. an agent who *wills* his own actions independently of any determining factor external or internal other than himself. Man is responsible, on Ibnul ‘Arabī’s view, in the unique sense that his actions spring directly from him and are *determined by his own* nature and the laws which govern it. Such laws are so fixed and so immutable that even God cannot change them. Everything is predestined from eternity. “That which is in your *thubūt* (latency) comes out in your *ẓuhūr* (externality); this is the mystery of predestination.” Ibnul ‘Arabī does not agree with the Muslim determinists (*al Jabriyyah*) who believe that human actions are determined by an *external* agent which they identify with God (as something different from and other than themselves) or with the Ash‘arites who hold that God *created* Man and all his actions. He emphatically denies *jabr* in the sense of *compulsion* imposed on the individual from outside;¹ yet he does not believe in free choice. Human beings, on his view, have no choice. There is only one alternative open to them, and this is the alternative they must choose, because it is determined by *their own* necessary laws. Man is so constituted, Ibnul ‘Arabī says, that he actually does what God wills him to do; he chooses of all possible alternative courses *one* which brings about the action that God wills—a view which greatly resembles Leibnitz’s doctrine of “Pre-established Harmony”.

Man brings it all upon himself: good or evil, “so let him praise no one but himself and blame no one but himself”.² All that God has in the matter is to decree that such and such actions should materialise. This constitutes His will, but His will is determined by His knowledge which is determined by the fixed laws of things,³ and so we keep on moving within

¹ *Fut.* I, p. 51, l. 6 from foot.

² *Fus.* p. 160.

³ *Fus.* pp. 239–40; cf. p. 123 or p. 120: “He knew them as they are”, etc.

that closed circle of thought which is typical of Ibnu 'Arabí's reasoning.

It is obvious that on such a theory there is no scope whatever for the play of free will, and Man should be held no more responsible for his actions than a stone should be called responsible when, obeying the natural law of gravity, it falls on a man and kills him. Responsibility or moral obligation has no meaning when there is no will. Ibnul 'Arabí's theory has a great deal of what is known in Ethics as Scientific Determinism. All actions, including the so-called volitional actions, are, according to this doctrine, determined by internal and external laws which (modern determinists would say) can all be calculated and accounted for scientifically. Ibnul 'Arabí agrees with the deterministic side of such a theory, but adds: (*a*) that the so-called scientific laws are nothing but God's laws, and (*b*) that God's laws in Man are determined by Man's own nature, and in this lies Man's *moral* obligation. But this is a most fallacious argument. What his theory really implies is a *formal not a moral* obligation. He himself admits that, when he says that the reason why we call Man and not God responsible (*mukallaf*)—although he believes that God is the actual doer of all actions—is that responsibility (*taklif*) *logically* belongs to the 'abd (as such). It is the place of the 'abd to obey and of the Rabb to command.¹

The distinction Ibnul 'Arabí makes between the One and the Many shows itself very clearly here. When he asserts that God is the doer of all actions he simply means that His Essence is the essence of men to whom actions are attributed,² and when he says that Man is the maker of his own destiny and the doer of all his actions, he is regarding the problem from the point of view of the Many. He is always oscillating between these two positions; in one place he says "that the

¹ *Fus.* p. 124. "He is (logically) the *mukallaf* and you the *mukallaf*."

² *Fut.* II, p. 286, l. 10. Ibnul 'Arabí says that "all actions are created by God, not Man: He is the commander and the commanded". Cf. *Fus.* pp. 291-2.

action *does not belong to the 'ayn* but to its Lord",¹ and in another "God has revealed to them that He did not do what they alleged that He did—all their deeds proceed from them".² Ibnul 'Arabí's denial of real human freedom in action, which led him to deny also moral obligation in any real sense, is quite in harmony with his general pantheistic system. Having reduced moral obligation to a merely *formal* one, it matters very little upon whom we say the responsibility of our moral actions really falls. If we say *we* are responsible, we are right, and if we say God is responsible we are equally right: but we must always remember the point of view.

Ibnul 'Arabí rules out not only the individual freedom of Man, but that of God's will as well. God does not will in the sense that He chooses, but in the sense that He decrees what He knows will take place. That the thing or action which God has decreed should take place depends entirely on *its* own necessary laws.

Logically, he argues, a "possible" thing or action may be one or other of many alternative things or actions, but *actually* it is only one: the one God knows will take place. It is meaningless to say, he adds, "had God willed, He would have guided us all aright".³ It is impossible for God to will what lies not in the nature of things. The intrinsic laws of Man are the deciding factor in all that he does, good or evil. This brings us to the next point.

(b) *The Problem of Good and Evil*

The question as to the reality of good and evil, as understood by Ibnul 'Arabí, depends for its solution on the much wider question of what he calls "Reality" and "Appearance" or *Hagq* and *Khalq*. In the sphere of the Real the antithesis good and evil has no application. Ibnul 'Arabí, following Plato,

¹ *Fus.* p. 146; and p. 324: "There is no action which is not God's although some actions are called blameworthy and others praiseworthy."

² *Fus.* p. 120.

³ Ref. to the Qur. vi, 150.

calls it the sphere of the Absolute Good (*al Khayru'l Maḥḍ*). In the Phenomenal World, on the other hand, he admits the reality of both good and evil,¹ but adds that, if we must make a distinction at all between good and evil, we should always attribute good to God and evil to Man, not in the sense that Man actually *does* evil, but rather in the sense that some of his actions are judged to be evil. We live in a world of values and laws and we judge actions and objects relatively to these values and laws. Evil for Ibnul 'Arabī is not a positive quantity. Pure evil is the same as pure not-being and pure darkness (*ash-sharru'l maḥḍ huwa'l 'adamu'l maḥḍ waṣ-ṣulmatu'l maḥḍah*), and pure good is pure being and pure light (*al wuḥūdu'l maḥḍ huwa'l khayru'l maḥḍ wan-nūru'l maḥḍ*). Ibnul 'Arabī uses the terms "light" and "darkness" of the Zoroastrians, but he does not regard them, as they do, as *two* independent and *real* Principles. According to him and Suhrawardī al Maqtūl the difference between "light" and "darkness" is not one of contrariety, but that of existence and non-existence. Ibnul 'Arabī is more like Spinoza, who believes that positive being is the source of all good and negative being is the basis of all evil.²

(c) *The Relativity of Good and Evil*

Ibnul 'Arabī's conception of good and evil does not seem to be limited to the strictly ethical good and evil. He, for example, includes such things as physical pain, failing health, poverty, animal cruelty and so on in what he calls evil. For him, all evil, ethical or otherwise, is relative. There is nothing that is evil *in itself*, and God never creates (in Ibnul 'Arabī's sense of the term) any evil. Things and actions are called evil for one or other of the following reasons:

- (i) because one religion or other regards them as such;
- (ii) relatively to a certain ethical principle or customary standard approved by a community;

¹ "It is impossible to erase evil from the world." *Fus.* p. 447.

² *Fut.* I, p. 520, l. 5.

- (iii) because they are incongruous with some individual temperament;
- (iv) because they fail to satisfy some natural, moral or intellectual desires of an individual and so on.

Apart from these and other similar standards by which we measure the goodness or evilness of things and actions, there is nothing, Ibnul 'Arabí says, except the bare essences of things (*a'yānu'l manjúdāt*) which we cannot describe as good or evil.¹

In addition to the things which have already been mentioned as coming under Ibnul 'Arabí's category of evil, we may include ignorance, falsehood, disharmony, disorder, ugliness, sin, infidelity, incompatibility of temper and so on. In all of these there is something *lacking*, some positive being or quality which, if added to the things or actions we call evil, would convert them into good. Nothing is evil: all that *is* good. In other words what we call evil is *subjective*, not an objective reality. But even "*good*" as contrasted with evil is subjective and relative. The only good that is *absolute* is Pure Being (God, *the Good*).

Ibnul 'Arabí also explains the relativity of good and evil in a different way. Our judgment of the goodness and evilness of things is relative to our *knowledge*. We call a thing or an action evil, because of our ignorance of the good that is hidden therein. Everything, he says, has an external and internal aspect. In its internal aspect lies the purpose of the Creator, and if we are ignorant of such purpose, we are apt to pronounce such a thing to be evil. Ibnul 'Arabí gives medicine as an illustration of what he wishes to say. Here is a case of an apparent evil (e.g. the unpleasantness resulting from tasting a repugnant medicine) and of a positive good of which the patient, who condemns his medicine as evil, may be ignorant. A thing like medicine therefore is regarded as evil for two reasons, and it is a *relative* evil in each case:

- (1) it lacks some positive qualities on account of the

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 760, l. 2 foll., for a full account of what Ibnul 'Arabí means by relative good and evil; cf. *Fut.* p. 446.

absence of which it does not appeal to the taste of the patient who regards it as evil;

- (ii) it is considered an evil relatively to the knowledge of the patient who is ignorant of the good that is in it.

In itself, medicine cannot be described as good or evil, and the same may be said of all other goods and evils.

Ibnul 'Arabî adds that ultimately both good and evil come from God. To put it in other words, all things are manifestations of God and all actions are His actions, only we call some of them good and the others bad. The Mercy of God is shown in all things and actions,¹ for it is through His Mercy that everything has come to being. Things are so created by God as to exhibit various degrees of perfection (perfection = being) and give rise to our judgments (ethical or otherwise) of them. It was the will of God that we should have ideas of perfection and imperfection, harmony and disharmony, good and evil, obedience and disobedience, vice and virtue, congruity and incongruity and so on, so that we may know the full nature of God and ourselves. What application can such divine Names as *Al Hādî* (the Guiding One), *Al Mudîll* (the One who leads astray), *Al Ghaffār* (the Pardoner), *Al Mu'adhib* (the Tormenter), *Al Raḥîm* (the Merciful) have in a world in which nothing but the good exists? Besides, it is essential for Mankind to have ideas of good and evil and norms whereby to judge actions. A society with no such norms cannot possibly exist or progress.

(d) *The Relation of Good and Evil to the Divine Law and the Place of the Divine Will in Ibnul 'Arabî's Theory*

This is by far the most obscure part in Ibnul 'Arabî's ethical theory. The chief difficulty is not so much in understanding what he says on the subject, as in trying to follow him consistently. We have already seen how he tries to reconcile two absolutely irreconcilable theories, viz. his pantheistic doctrine

¹ *Fuṣ*, p. 448. Cf. *Fut.* III, p. 563, l. 1 from foot.

and a doctrine of moral obligation of some sort, and how he ends by explaining away the latter altogether. Here we shall see how he attempts to bring into harmony the divine law of religion and the ethical problem of good and evil and how he ends by throwing over the whole of Islam and its laws.

(e) *The Meaning of the Divine Will*

Ibnul 'Arabí makes a distinction between two kinds of divine Will: (a) The *mashí'ah*, by which he means something like the divine Consciousness which is present in all things—the eternal "Power" of God which decrees that things (potential or actual) should be what they are. In the language of theology it is called the divine Decree or Predestination, etc., etc.—but a scientist might identify it with the potential laws which determine all occurrents in the external world. Strictly speaking we should not call *mashí'ah* will at all. Ibnul 'Arabí means by it the divine Essence itself. He calls it *al wujūd* (Being or God)¹ and approves of Abū Ṭālib al Makki's calling it '*arsh al dhāt* (the throne of the Essence).² (b) The creative will (*irādah*), by which Ibnul 'Arabí means a power by means of which God brings into external manifestation potential existents. The fact that a thing has any "being" at all is an act of *mashí'ah*, but that it is manifested in the external world is an act of *irādah*. By *irādah* God wills the occurrence *as well as* the non-occurrence of a thing or an action in the external world.³ This distinction between *mashí'ah* and *irādah* Ibnul 'Arabí owes to Ḥallāj, although for Ḥallāj *mashí'ah* is more like an emanation from God, something like Plotinus' First Intellect.

The next point to be considered is the exact relation between the divine Decree (*al mashí'ah*) and the divine Com-

¹ *Fut.* iv, p. 55, l. 6 from foot.

² *Fut.* ii, p. 51, l. 3 from foot. Cf. *Fut.* iii, p. 62, l. 8 from foot, and *Fut.* iv, p. 55.

³ This is what Ibnul 'Arabí means by "increase", and "decrease" (*ziyādah* and *naqs*), *Fus.* p. 374.

mand (*amr*). Here, Ibnul 'Arabí follows Ḥallāj more closely.¹ Like him, he believes that all actions are done in accordance with the divine Decree, although some actions, viz. the so-called evil actions actually contradict God's commands.² The meaning of sin (*ma'siyah*) is that God commands an action, but does not will its occurrence, or wills that an action should take place, but forbids His servants to do it. "The prophets are asked to communicate God's commandments to people, but God does not always will that such commandments should be fulfilled."³ An action once decreed must take place, and it is impossible that it should not. The disobedience of Iblis and Pharaoh (whom Ḥallāj and Ibnul 'Arabí regard as their masters on this subject) was the very obedience to God's Will, although it was a violation of His command.⁴ All the so-called actions of disobedience are decreed by God, but *as actions* not as objects of moral or religious laws. God does not decree sinful action or create evil, but He decrees actions which *we* or He judge by an ethical or religious standard and call right or wrong, and He creates objects which *we* or He consider as good or evil. God wills the 'ayn of the action (i.e. the action itself, not the action as good or evil), and it is only when it is done under certain specific conditions that the action is called good or evil.⁵ Actions *as actions* are *all* "approved" by God. "He is blessed", Ibnul 'Arabí says, "who is approved by his Lord, and there is none that is not approved in the sight of his Lord."⁶ In the eye of the Law, on the other hand, some actions are approved and others are not. God approves of *all* actions because all actions are ultimately His. The so-called *nizā'* (conflict) between actions and law is only accidental ('*aradī*) and apparent. We call it

¹ *Tawāstin*, pp. 148-9.

² *Fuṣ*. p. 164. Cf. *Tawāstin*, pp. 46, 56.

³ *Fuṣ*. p. 164.

⁴ Ḥallāj calls Iblis and Pharaoh heroes (*min ahli'l futuwvab*). He adds that Pharaoh's *da'wā*, viz. his saying "I am your Lord most High", *Qur.* lxxxix, 24, was decreed by God, and that his own *da'wā*, i.e. his saying "I am the Real" (*ana'l Ḥaqq*), was also in conformity with God's Will. See *Tawāstin*, p. 50.

⁵ *Fuṣ*. p. 319.

⁶ *Fuṣ*. pp. 145, 146. Cf. *Fut.* II, p. 290, ll. 10, 11.

conflict or contradiction or disobedience on account of our ignorance of the fact that *all* actions, good or evil, are in conformity with the divine Decree which is the only law all actions follow. "Sin is disobedience, not to the divine Will", or as Ibnul 'Arabî sometimes puts it, "not to the *creative* command of God (*al amr al takwîni*) but to the mediate religious command (*al amr b'il wāsiṭah* or *al amr al taklîfi*)."¹

It might seem absurd to say that God commands people to do an action, yet wills or decrees that that action should not take place, or decrees that an action should take place, yet forbids people to do it, calling them in both cases sinners (*āṣṭn*). But this is not so when we realise that, on Ibnul 'Arabî's view—also that of Hallāj—the divine Command (*amr*) is not a *real* command (*amr*) but is what they call *ibtilā'* (trial). This is the culminating point of Ibnul 'Arabî's Ethics, which as we now see is pure antinomianism. He could not solve the problem without doing away altogether with moral obligation on the one hand and religious laws on the other. He would have failed to be consistent if he had not done so.

Ibnul 'Arabî concludes by saying that to admit the reality of evil and sin, in the sense explained above, as decreed (or actually done) by God, is not against His wisdom or providence. On the contrary, it would have been against God's wisdom if He had not created things which we call evil or decreed actions which we call sins. The world would not have been complete or perfect, for it is a part of the perfection of the world to include what we call imperfection. God's complete perfections would not have been manifested. The existence of evil causes some of us to pray to God to remove it, and in removing it such divine Names as the Merciful and the Benevolent, etc., etc., are justified. Ibnul 'Arabî disagrees with earlier Ṣūfis about their definition of "patience" (*ṣabr*), which for them meant complete self-restraint from all manner of complaint of evil. To complain, even to God, according to them was incompatible with resignation to

¹ *Fus.* p. 319.

the divine Decree. His own view is that complaint to God Himself, not to any *particular* individual, does not impair resignation to the divine Will, although it may impair the satisfaction with the thing which is willed or decreed. He also adds that we are enjoined to accept not that which God has decreed (*al maqḍi bihi*) but the Decree itself (*al Qaḍā*). "Prayer for removal of evil should be submitted to God", Ibnul 'Arabī says; "... it behoves a person in pain to pray to God to remove it, because by so doing God removes it from Himself."¹ On the contrary, Ibnul 'Arabī argues that to try to refrain from complaint to God when you are afflicted with pain is to defy Fate, and this is ignorance.

This, in outline, is Ibnul 'Arabī's Ethics. The pivot round which it all turns is *self-realisation*. Everything and every action has one ultimate aim which it is bound to achieve, and this is to realise itself, and in so doing it realises one or other of God's infinite perfections which include the so-called imperfections according to Ethics or Religion.

Ibnul 'Arabī does not give us an ethical *system* with some definite ideal to strive after, but rather a metaphysical account of an ethical theory of Determinism. His is not a normative Ethics; it does not teach us what we *ought* to do, but *how* we come to do what we do, and *who* is the actual doer of actions.

§ III

THE QUESTION OF PUNISHMENT AND REWARD: IBNUL 'ARABĪ'S CONCEPTION OF HEAVEN AND HELL, AND HIS ESCHATOLOGY

Having settled the questions of religious beliefs and moral obligation on rigidly deterministic lines as he was forced to do, Ibnul 'Arabī finds himself faced with the problems of punishment and reward: Heaven and Hell, which are always associated with such questions. Curiously enough, he does mention Heaven and Hell, and assigns a definite place to

¹ *Fus.* pp. 339-40; cf. p. 160, where Ibnul 'Arabī says that God feels pleasure and pain.

them in his system. He also talks about a future life and a host of other eschatological matters, preserving in his description of them the minutest details of the stupendous Muslim literature on the subject. But in spite of all this, and in spite of the orthodox appearance with which Ibnul 'Arabí cloaks his ideas, it is not very difficult to realise that neither his Heaven is Heaven nor his Hell is Hell, and the same remark applies to other eschatological details pertaining to this subject. His "determinism" in Ethics and pantheism in religion make it absolutely impossible for him to entertain any notion of a real Heaven and Hell which exist or will exist in a future world. Yet he mentions them, but we shall see now in what way.

Ibnul 'Arabí's language in describing such things as Heaven and Hell consists usually of two parts: a constructive part which gives an orthodox picture of the object described, and a destructive part where Ibnul 'Arabí sets himself the laborious task of explaining away¹ the orthodox terms used in his description, at the same time putting forth his own pantheistic views. These constructive and destructive processes are most apparent in the subject we are discussing.

First, Ibnul 'Arabí draws a vivid picture of Heaven and Hell, full of archaeological details borrowed chiefly from Muslim lore. He describes in a very materialistic way the place of Heaven and Hell² as being situated between the "Starry Sphere" (*al falaku'l mukawwab*) and the "Starless Sphere" (*al falaku'l aṭlas*): the former being the floor of Heaven and the latter its roof. Our world is all that is below the Starry Sphere.³ He describes the "gathering place" (*al maḥshar*), the "Path" (*al ṣirāṭ*), the "heap" (*al kathīb*), the arrival of God on the Day of Judgment with His rows of Angels, the "scales" (*al mīzān*), the delights of Heaven and the tortures of Hell, the stages of Heaven and Hell, the

¹ His allegorical interpretations of the eschatological doctrine of Islam bear a remarkable resemblance to those of the Ismā'īlians and the Carmathians.

² See *Fut.* III, pp. 568-70.

³ *Fut.* III, p. 570.

"intermediary stage" (*al barzakh*: Purgatory), the intercession of Mohammed and other prophets, etc., etc. He even supplies us with diagrams of Heaven and Hell.¹

Having completed his description of the next world with its Heaven and Hell, etc., Ibnul 'Arabí tells us that we are not bound to understand any of the terms he has used, in its usual traditional sense. The terms *hashr*, *barzakh*, *mizān*, '*adhāb*, *na'īm*, etc., are merely "allegorical representations of states" (*maqāmāt tushakbikhaṣ*) and "corporealizations of ideas" (*ma'ānī tujassad*). "What we learn from tradition", he says, "is mere words and it is left to us to find out what such words mean",² i.e. to read into them any meaning we like, which is precisely what Ibnul 'Arabí himself does. There is no *real* intercession (*shafā'ah*) on the Day of Judgment: the term simply means a relation between the two divine Names, the Merciful and the Avenger. The *ṣirāt* is simply the straight path of the divine Essence on which everything "walks" because it is the source whence all things come and whither all things return. The tortures of Hell are nothing but symbols for men's actions.³ Paradise (*jannah*), he says, comes from the verb *janna* to conceal, and the *jannah* of all is the divine Essence in which all multiplicity will be "concealed". On the other hand, Hell (*jahannam*) means distance or farness (*bu'd*),⁴ and the real Hell lies in imagining that there is a real chasm between you and God and not realising your essential oneness with Him.

It is instructive to notice the etymological derivation of many of these terms and how Ibnul 'Arabí explains them so as to fit in with his pantheistic doctrine. The "Day of Grief" (*yawmu'l ḥasrah*), e.g., he understands as the "Day of Unveiling", from *ḥasara* to unveil, i.e. the day on which the One Essence will be revealed in its absolute universality.⁵ '*Adhāb* (punishment) does not mean what we understand it to mean;

¹ *Fut.* III, p. 554.

³ *Fut.* I, p. 412, l. 16 foll.

⁵ *Fut.* I, p. 391, l. 5 from foot.

² *Fut.* I, p. 412, l. 4 foll.

⁴ *Fus.* pp. 186-7.

it comes, he says, from *'adhuba* to be sweet, thus reducing the torments of Hell to eternal happiness.¹ By *ḥaṣhr* (gathering) he means the gathering together of all individual souls in the One Universal Soul. Every man's "resurrection" (*qiyāmah*) is the return of his soul to its spiritual "home" after being freed from the body through death,² and so on and so on.

Ibnul 'Arabī's denial of the existence of a real Hell or Heaven either in this world or in the next is expressed in three different ways:

(1) He calls them imaginative. They are no more *concrete* or real than Abraham's "fire" which was a mere creation of his imagination.³ The damned will see Hell-Fire, but they will no more feel its tortures than Abraham felt any torture from his. It will be a *phenomenal* fire although to the *profane* it will *seem* real.

(2) He reduces Heaven and Hell to two *subjective* states. Hell is the realisation of the individual "self" as a mere "slave" (*'abd*). It is selfhood. Heaven, on the other hand, is the realisation of one's "lordship" (*rubūbiyyah*), i.e. of the divine aspect of his being.⁴

(3) Ibnul 'Arabī makes it absolutely clear that there is no difference whatever between Heaven and Hell, for how can there be any difference where there is a salvation for all? The "damned" will remain in Hell-Fire,⁵ it is true, but they will experience therein all the delights of Paradise (*ma'ānī al-jannah*) with the sole exception of the *wasīlah* (approach or drawing nigh to God). He interprets all the names of the *Jannāt* (the gardens in Heaven) as meaning different kinds of bliss which the people of Heaven as well as those of Hell will enjoy. They will all enjoy bliss (*na'im*), everlastingness (*khuld*), refuge (*ma'wā*) peace, (*salām*) and so on. The only distinction between the blessed and the damned, if any, is

¹ *Fus.* p. 153.

² *Fut* I, p. 406, l. 19. Cf. *Iḥwānūs-Safā*, III, pp. 81, 120 and IV, p. 73.

³ *Fus.* p. 328.

⁴ *Fus.* pp. 286-7.

⁵ To fulfil God's threat which is mentioned in the Qur'ān: "I will surely fill Hell with *jinn* and with men all together." Qur. xxxiii, 13.

that the former will behold the Beatific Vision of the Epiphany of the Lord¹ and apprehend it on its first appearance, while the latter will be too "veiled" to recognise it at first, but when the "veils" are removed even this difference will disappear.

These are the ways in which Ibnul 'Arabī explains away the notion of real Heaven and Hell after having taken so much pains to describe them. Of life after death Ibnul 'Arabī seems to have no doubt whatever, for life, according to him, is continuous and unceasing. There is only One Being in existence and therefore there is but *one* life. The so-called this world and the next world are, as we have already said, nothing but the visible and the invisible aspects of the One. Ibnul 'Arabī emphatically denies the existence of any world (other than this) in which the so-called "future-life" will be lived. We now live *in* the One and after death we shall continue to do so. But even if this is so, is it possible that there can be a place for Heaven and Hell (not necessarily the traditional ones) in Ibnul 'Arabī's system? That is to say, is it conceivable that even after our return to the one universal Essence or Soul whence we came, that we shall still *experience* any form of bliss or torment, even of a purely spiritual kind? Positive pain, Ibnul 'Arabī seems to deny as we have already seen. "God's threat has no real object."² He also denies that there is any Qur'ānic evidence for eternal Punishment: all that the Qur'ān asserts is *eternal life* in Hell, but this is not the same as *eternal punishment*, for according to him, life in Hell will be painless.³ And "though the damned", Ibnul 'Arabī

¹ When He reveals Himself in the Name *al Haqq* (the Real), *Fuṣ.* p. 213.

² *Fuṣ.* p. 153.

³ *Fut.* III, p. 100, l. 9 from foot. It is curious that the denial of eternal Punishment in Hell is attributed to Ibn Taymiyyah, who says that after a time the people of Hell shall be transferred to Paradise. He quotes a Prophetic Tradition: "By God in whose hands my soul is, there will come a time when the gates of Hell will be slamming (i.e. it will be empty) and cress will grow on its floor (i.e. it will be cool)." Al Jāhiz also held the same view: see al Jāhizīyah in *Shahrastānī*. The Murji'ites, particularly Jahm b. Ṣafwān, denied the eternity of both Heaven and Hell; see *Maqālātun 'l Islāmiyyīn*, pp. 148-9.

says, "will enter the abode of misery, they will experience therein *happiness* which will be different from that of Paradise."¹ The two kinds of happiness will be essentially the same, but the *tajalli* of God in each will be different. The only kind of torment the damned will experience is a negative one; they will be deprived, for a time, of the greatest happiness of all, i.e. the realisation, on their return to the Essence, of their inseparable unity with God, but eventually, everlasting happiness will be enjoyed by all.

With this unique conception of Heaven and Hell and the After-life Ibnul 'Arabī's metaphysical system is completed. The One whence all things come is the one to which they will all return. But on their return they will experience various degrees of happiness (intellectual happiness) in a measure proportionate to their *knowledge* of His nature and their relation to Him. Ibnul 'Arabī emphasises the importance of "gnosis" to such an extent that he makes it the sole distinction between the people of Heaven and those of Hell. *Gnosis* coupled with unshakable *faith* is certain to win us Ibnul 'Arabī's Paradise, and ignorance and disbelief his Hell.² When we return to the One we shall realise the truth or falsity of our beliefs, and our position relative to Him will be determined entirely by the nature of such beliefs. The Gnostics alone will be in immediate contact with Him, and this will constitute the highest and most intellectual happiness in Heaven. In Hell there will be the "torture of the veil" (*'adhābu'l hijāb*) and the "torture of ignorance" (*'adhābu'l jabl*) which, as I have already remarked, will be negative and will only last until the true knowledge is revealed.³ Then, and only then, will the universal Mercy of God embrace all and reign over all. Ibnul 'Arabī expresses the same idea in a most remarkable way in his description of the *kathīb* (sand-

¹ *Fus.* p. 153. Cf. *Fus.* III, p. 98, l. 4 from foot.

² On the importance of "faith" see *Fus.* III, p. 568, l. 13: "the Storeys of Heaven will number as the branches of faith."

³ *Fus.* III, p. 577, l. 3 from foot. For God's universal Mercy see *Fus.* p. 320, 335, 351, etc.

hill).¹ The *kathib* in his language seems to be identical with the divine Essence. It is a heap of "white musk", he says, in which all souls will assemble in the "next world", each taking its place according to its spiritual rank. Every soul will be drawn to the *kathib* as instinctively as the babe is drawn to his mother's bosom, or the steel to a magnet. It will be impossible for any soul to be drawn to any place other than her own in which alone she will find her ultimate happiness. They will be arranged in an order of higher and lower, but each will enjoy in her place "a blissful life of everlasting wakefulness, peace and happiness, life which will never be interrupted by death or sleep. All limitations of the senses, and most particularly those of the intellect, will be broken and every soul will become all-seeing and all-hearing because every soul will become (without real becoming) God Himself."

The least such a theory implies is that in the next world (as understood by Ibnul 'Arabí) personal identity of individual beings will be preserved in such a way as to make enjoyment, at least of an intellectual sort of happiness, possible. Ibnul 'Arabí does not say plainly that multiplicity of individuals in the next world will be merely apparent as he says with regard to the phenomenal multiplicity in this world. He seems to have landed himself into a form of dilemma which was almost inevitable on such a view as his. Either he regards multiplicity of individuals in the next world as real or subjective. If the former, his whole system would fall to the ground, since he would be admitting a duality of God and individual souls, and God (or Reality) for him is an essential unity. If the latter, i.e. if there will be no real multiplicity in the next world, which is what Ibnul 'Arabí really wishes to assert,² then how can there be any difference between the

¹ Which in Muslim "tradition" stands for the place where all people will assemble on the Day of Judgment.

² Although he speaks of "vehicles" of the souls in the next world, when he says "and God shall fashion for every soul a vehicle (*markab*), a body or a form of the same nature as the world to which the soul shall be transferred", *Fus.* p. 327. These *marākib* are merely symbols for the different degrees of spirituality which each soul will possess in the "next world".

experience of one being and that of another, or how is it possible that there will be any beings (in the plural) at all? Even regarding the souls, on their ultimate "return" to the One Universal Soul, as states (analogous to our mental states), which have never severed themselves from the One Soul or *really* returned to it, the difficulty would still remain insuperable. But it is just as difficult (except for a mystic) to conceive how the multiplicity of being in the *external* world is an essential unity as it is to conceive how a multiplicity of souls in the *spiritual* world will be an essential unity, yet preserving such a degree of consciousness as would enable them to enjoy their various grades of spiritual happiness.

§ IV

IBNUL 'ARABÍ'S AESTHETICS

(a) *His view on Love and its Place in his System*

The most characteristic feature of Ibnul 'Arabí's pantheism is its universality. We have already seen that, all the way through, the One Reality has been regarded in one or the other of its numerous aspects, all of which are universal. In Ibnul 'Arabí's metaphysics e.g., the One is regarded as the all-embracing Being—the ultimate ground of all existence. In his Ethics it is identified with the all-active and all-willing Principle. In his Religion it is the all-worshipped Deity. In his Mysticism it is the all-pervading Consciousness. And now in his Aesthetics Ibnul 'Arabí regards the same Reality as the all-prevailing Love and Beauty.

The fundamental factor underlying all these manifestations of the One Reality is, according to Ibnul 'Arabí, divine Love. It is extraordinary that many pantheistic Šûfis have looked upon divine Love as being a primordial principle in everything that takes place in the universe. Ḥallāj was one of the earliest to speak of it in this way. For Abû Sa'íd b. Abil Khayr, God was more the Loving and the Affectionate One (*al Wadūd*) than the Tormenter (*al Mu'adhdhib*). In his recita-

tion of the Qur'ān, he intentionally used to skip all the passages which deal with Hell and describe its tortures. Love was the deepest and the profoundest of all their sentiments, and indeed it was on Love (mystical Love) that many of them found the ultimate ground of their beliefs.

(b) *The Three Kinds of Love*

Ibnul 'Arabī recognises three kinds of Love which he calls natural love, spiritual love and divine love. The first two are species of the third. By divine love he means the essential love of the One—the eternal love which is the source of all other kinds. Before any form of modalisation, the One, in His supreme “isolation” and simplicity, loved Himself for and in Himself, and loved to be known and to be manifested. This was the cause of creation. In loving Himself, the One loved all the *a'yān* of things latent in His Essence, and hence they are impregnated with the love they now manifest in different ways. “The love of the *a'yān* began”, Ibnul 'Arabī says, “when they were still in the Blindness (*al 'amā*) when they first heard God's creative Word (Be).”¹

By spiritual love he means mystical love, of which the ultimate aim is realisation of the essential unity of the lover and the Beloved.² It is not human love, he says, which brings the mystic near to God and makes him feel one with Him; it is divine Love which, in refinding itself, as it were, realises its affinity as a “form” with the universal Love of the Whole. This is the most perfect kind of love. It is the love of the Whole as a Whole (as an Essence) and as a “part” (as a particular mode of the Essence). It is what the Ṣūfīs mean by rapture (*hayamān*). Ibnul 'Arabī's pantheism stands in bold relief here when he says that the ultimate goal of love is to know the reality of love and that the reality of love is identical with God's Essence. Love is not an abstract quality superadded to the Essence. It is not a relation between a lover and an object loved. This is the true love of the

¹ *Fut.* II, p. 437, l. 8 from foot.

² *Fut.* II, p. 441, l. 16.

"gnostics" who know no *particular* object of love. It is the profane that love forms.¹ Nothing is loved except God, just as nothing is worshipped except Him. When we say that we love x , y or z , what we really mean is that we love God in the forms of x , y or z and it is ignorance to say that we love x , y or z *themselves*, just as it is ignorance to say that we worship x , y or z *themselves*.²

Ibnul 'Arabî refuses to explain his theory of mystical love in terms of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) or "fusion" (*maṣṣaf*) as Ḥallāj does. He agrees with what the Ḥulūlists say, but differs from them on the interpretation they put on their doctrine. He quotes many verses generally attributed to Ḥallāj, which definitely point to a theory of incarnation or fusion, but he tries to explain them in his own pantheistic way.³ Ḥallāj's theory of incarnation is clearly expressed in his celebrated verses:

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I.
We are *two* spirits dwelling in one body.
If thou seest me, thou seest Him,
And if thou seest Him thou seest us both.⁴

With Ibnul 'Arabî it is more as it is with Spinoza; when we say we love God or anything, we mean that God loves Himself in us or in any other form. Spinoza expresses the same idea in the following words: "We love God with a love which is eternal, because our love of God is God loving Himself in us, just as we know God under the form of eternity, because our understanding of God is God thinking Himself in (or as) us."⁵

The third kind of love is natural love, the object of which is self-satisfaction, regardless of the object loved. In spiritual love, the "self" and all its desires are sacrificed in the interest of the Beloved. In natural love the object is sacrificed. Ibnul 'Arabî includes under natural love what he calls elemental love

¹ *Fut.* II, pp. 427-9.

² *Fut.* II, p. 431, l. 2 foll.

³ See, e.g., *Fut.* II, p. 445; III, p. 155.

⁴ *Tawāṣīf*, p. 134. Cf. other verses by Ḥallāj: *Tawāṣīf*, pp. 133, 134.

⁵ Joachim's Study in Spinoza's *Ethics*, p. 305.

(*al ḥubb al'unṣurī*), under which all physical, physiological, and even mechanical attractions may be classed. Even this he regards as a manifestation of the divine love in its lowest and crudest form.

(c) *Beauty is the Basis of Love*

According to Ibnul 'Arabī love is not an end in itself; it has no intrinsic value. The basis and the cause of all love is Beauty. This view was held long before Ibnul 'Arabī by Ibn Sīnā for whom Love was the prime mover in all things: it directs them all towards the attainment of the ultimately Beautiful who is also the Eternally Perfect. We love God, Ibnul 'Arabī says, because God is Beautiful, and He loves us and all His creation because He loves the Beautiful.¹ God's Beauty is the source of all types of Beauty. It is the source of all spiritual and intellectual beauty as well as beauty of form, although in itself God's Beauty is above all form and shape. God loves beauty of form because form reflects His own Beauty as it reflects his Being. In abstract beauty as well as in beauty of form, therefore, God ought to be loved and worshipped, and this is how a perfect Gnostic knows Him, loves Him and worships Him.

In his theory of Love thus described, Ibnul 'Arabī sums up his whole system and, with it, it is perfectly complete. Love is the cause of creation (or self-manifestation of the One in His infinite forms), but it is also the cause of the return of all the manifestations to the One. "Does not God say", Ibnul 'Arabī says, "O David, My yearning for them is greater than their yearning for me?" Love is the working principle in all manifestations of the One, from the highest to the lowest. It reaches its zenith in Man, the Perfect Man, who above all creation experiences all the three kinds of Love. Through Love, the Whole is bound together and through it the object of creation is realised.

¹ The Tradition says: "God is Beautiful and loves the Beautiful."

APPENDIX

THE SOURCES OF IBNUL ARABÍ'S SYSTEM

It is practically impossible to say that any particular philosophy or mysticism is the source of Ibnul 'Arabí's whole system. Ibnul 'Arabí had a foot in every camp, so to speak, and derived his material from every conceivable source. His system is eclectic in the highest degree, but we can easily find the germs from which many parts of this system seem to have developed, in the writings of older philosophers, Şûfis, and scholastic theologians. He borrowed ideas from Islamic as well as non-Islamic sources, orthodox as well as heterodox.

The principal idea of his system is comparatively simple, but round this idea he gathered an immense literature from all quarters and applied himself to the task of assimilating it all. Even grammar,¹ as well as law, theology,² mysticism and philosophy were all absorbed and interpreted in the light of this simple notion of the unity of all beings, an idea which coloured Ibnul 'Arabí's whole thought. Though he presents us with an extraordinary jumble of mixed doctrines and ideas which seem to clash in every possible direction, we can certainly find, after much hunting, sifting and synthesising, a residue which can rightly claim to be consistent and to be called his own.

This Appendix is divided into two parts: (a) to show that Monsieur A. Palacios' theory about the indebtedness of Ibnul 'Arabí to Ibn Masarra and other Spanish Şûfis is exaggerated, and (b) to state what seems to me to be the sources which influenced Ibnul 'Arabí's philosophy in some way or another. This is shown by means of parallel points given from Ibnul 'Arabí's system and the systems of other philosophers or mystics who seem to me to have influenced him. The last part of the Appendix shows how far Ibnul 'Arabí availed himself of the Qur'ān and alleged Prophetic Traditions.

Before dealing with Palacios' theory, I propose to give a general survey of the history of Şûfism in Spain during the century immediately preceding Ibnul 'Arabí's birth, for it was not till then that there was in the West anything worth calling

¹ See e.g. *Fut.* II, p. 192.

² See e.g. *Fut.* I, pp. 430-960. See also *Fut.* II, p. 219, where Ibnul 'Arabí explains in a mystical way "analogy" (*qiyās*) and "agreement" (*ijmā'*).

Šūfism. All the Šūfism that was known in Spain and North Africa up to the second half of the fifth century was a system of pious asceticism practised by men who possessed no philosophical knowledge whatever. They may have known a great deal of Islamic theology, but many of them were even ignorant of that. The Spanish Muslims were very averse to philosophy and free-thinking of any kind. They even anathematised and often committed to the flames such books as Ghazālī's. Orthodox Šūfis on the other hand, even those who were perfectly unlettered among them, were held in great honour and respected even by educated theologians.

A new school of Šūfis, who were more like the theosophists of the East, first appeared on the scene about A.H. 540 at Al Meria which, at that time, was the greatest spiritual centre of Šūfism in the West. From there, it seems, this kind of Šūfism spread throughout Andalusia, especially to Seville and Cordova, also to the west of Portugal. At Seville, the greatest Šūfī we know was Abu'l Hakam b. Barrajan (d. A.H. 536). At Al Meria, the head of the Šūfis was Abu'l 'Abbās b. al 'Arīf, a Bātinī Šūfī who died in 536 (or 537) and was buried near Ibn Barrajan. At Cordova, Abū Bakr al Māyurqī, who was a great traditionalist, a theologian and a pious Šūfī, was an eminent spiritual leader.¹

For over a century, i.e. from 450-560, Šūfism in the West was undergoing a process of transition. The School of Ibn Barrajan, Ibn Qasī, Ibnu'l 'Arīf and al Māyurqī marks the middle stage of this process, the outcome of which was shown in full bloom in the greatest of all Arabic-speaking mystics, Ibnul 'Arabī. Much against the will of the Western theologians, philosophy was spreading and men like Ibn Bājja (d. 533/1138), Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 531/1136) and the great Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) came to the forefront. But philosophy (except perhaps in the case of Ibn Ṭufayl) was little mixed with Šūfism or theology. It was the aim of Ibn Barrajan and his colleagues to introduce this element into Šūfism, and for that purpose they started with Ghazālī as their master. They (particularly Ibn Qasī) expounded the doctrines of Ghazālī and defended him with great enthusiasm. The philosophy of Aristotle, Plato and the Neoplatonists, was already known to the West through translations brought from the East

¹ He, Ibn Barrajan, and Ibnu'l 'Arīf were summoned to Morocco by the Governor of North Africa and kept in custody until A.H. 536 (or 537), the year in which Ibn Barrajan and Ibn al 'Arīf died. Al Māyurqī then fled to Bijāyah where he continued his preaching. See *Takmilā*, by Ibn al Abbār (b. 608).

and commentaries by Ibn Rushd and works by his master Ibn Tufayl. Many books on philosophical and theological sects (e.g. Shahrastānī's) were already in use. In Spain itself, men like Ibn Hazm started writing on this subject. Also books like the *Epistles* of the Ikhwānu's Ṣafā were popular. Scholasticism, especially Mu'tazilism, which had been known in Spain centuries before Ṣūfism or Philosophy, still retained its hold on certain people. And lastly, Ṣūfī treatises like Qushayrī's *Risālah* were diligently studied by the Western Ṣūfis. No attempt, as yet, was made by any occidental writer to reconcile any of these subjects with the others. The task was left to Ibnul 'Arabī, who tried to syncretise all, and in a less degree to his contemporary and countryman Ibn Sab'īn (d. 668/1269) who belongs to Ibnul 'Arabī's school.

This, in outline, is the intellectual atmosphere into which Ibnul 'Arabī was born. Can we say, then, that he was the child of his age as many thinkers usually are? Does he definitely belong to the School of Ṣūfis just described? It is true that Ibnul 'Arabī spent the first thirty years of his life in Spain, particularly at Seville, the home and centre of the teaching of Ibn Barraja'n. It is also true that he studied at Tunis the Khal' al Na'layn of Ibn Qasī on which he is said to have written a commentary.¹ Ibnul 'Arabī himself also tells us that he met at Al Meria some direct disciples of Ibn al 'Arif like Abū 'Abdillah al Ghazzāl and Abū'l Rabī' al Kafīf, but says nothing more about them.² To Ibn Barraja'n,³ Ibn Qasī,⁴ and Ibn al 'Arif⁵ Ibnul 'Arabī refers in his *Futūḥāt*, *Fuṣūṣ* and *Mawāqī'im-Nujūm* on many occasions, sometimes with approval, sometimes with disapproval. He does not tell us how much he owes to these three Ṣūfis, but it seems evident that his early initiation in theosophy must have been influenced by them through study of their works, with which he seems to have been familiar. If we regard him as their disciple, therefore, it must be in the sense that they, as well as many other Ṣūfis and philosophers, may be counted among his masters. Ibnul 'Arabī's mature thought developed more in the East.

¹ In *Fut.* iv, p. 164, l. 6, Ibnul 'Arabī mentions this book and the fact that he read it with Ibn Qasī's own son at Tunis, but he says nothing about a commentary.

² *Fut.* i, pp. 297, 724-5.

³ See *Fut.* i, pp. 75, 388; ii, pp. 79, 136, 762, 859; iii, p. 101; iv, p. 282.

⁴ See *Fut.* i, pp. 176, 388, 407, 943; ii, pp. 68, 79, 211, 340, 907; iii, pp. 8-9, 31, 218, 428, 465, iv, p. 164; and *Fur.* pp. 111, 355.

⁵ *Fut.* i, pp. 119, 145, 227, 297, 363; ii, pp. 128, 189, 384, 421, 429, 811; iii, pp. 520, 637; iv, pp. 105, 117, 714.

As regards the works written by these three Şûfis, there is one extant MS. of Ibn Qasî's "Khal'u'l Na'layn" and another MS. of Ibnu'l 'Arîf's "Maḥāsîn al Majālis" and three MSS. of three works attributed to Ibn Barraġān.¹ The last three MSS. have been accessible to me and in none of them can I see, judging from the general attitude of Ibn Barraġān, who was definitely the most philosophical of this school, any kind of resemblance to Ibnul 'Arabî's attitude. Ibn Barraġān is certainly not a pantheistic Şûfî, although he may rightly be called a theosophist. His Commentary on the Qur'ān is mystical in parts.

Ibnul 'Arabî's references to these three Şûfis are so scanty that they reveal to us very little of their doctrines. Only here and there do we find Ibnul 'Arabî referring to an isolated idea of one or other of these Şûfis which he works into his system as he seems to have done with hundreds of other ideas. The following are perhaps the most important:

- (1) Ibnu'l 'Arîf's distinction between "intellectual knowledge" ('ilm) and "gnosis" (ma'rifa),²
- (2) Ibn Barraġān's view on *al Ḥaqq al Makblûqu bihi*.³

Ibn Barraġān himself uses this term to mean God as we find Him described in the Qur'ān and as we know Him through our knowledge of His creation, i.e. God the Creator and the Designer of the universe as distinguished from *al Ḥaqq* (the Real without any further qualification) who transcends all knowledge, i.e. God in Himself as He really is. *Al Ḥaqq al Makblûqu bihi* is God as revealed to us through His Names, Attributes and Actions which are exemplified on every hand in the Phenomenal World. Some of these Names, Attributes and Actions which are not manifested in this world will be manifested in the world to come. They are the divine laws operating everywhere and by so doing they reveal the original nature of things as God predestined them to be. Ibn Barraġān's view is thoroughly orthodox. His term *al Ḥaqq al Makblûqu bihi* (which he seems to have been the first to coin) is based on such Qur'ānic verses as "Nor did we create the heavens and the earth in play: we did but create them in truth" (*bil Ḥaqq*), Qur. XLIV, 38, and "He it is who made the sun for brightness and the moon for light. . . . God created (all) that in truth" (*bil Ḥaqq*), Qur. x, 5. Ibnul 'Arabî on the other hand regards this term as equivalent to the Logos: the Reality of Mohammed, etc. (see Chapter on the Logos).

¹ They are really two works: see Bibliography.

² *Fut.* II, p. 421, l. 12.

³ *Fut.* III, p. 101, l. 12 from foot.

- (3) Ibnu'l 'Arif on the meaning of *fanû*¹ and his view on God being the ground of all things.² From Ibnul 'Arabî's short quotation from Mahâsin al Majâlis, we cannot possibly tell whether Ibnu'l 'Arif meant this in the pantheistic sense in which Ibnul 'Arabî takes it.
- (4) On Ibn Qasî's view of the identity of all the divine Names.³

On the practical side of Sûfism Ibnul 'Arabî was initiated by Sûfis of a totally different type. He refers to a large number of them in his *Futûbât* and *Risâlatu'l Quds*. Of these the following are examples:

- (1) Yûsuf b. Khalaf al Kûmî (d. at Alex. 576/1180)⁴ was a personal disciple of Shaykh Abû Madyan. Ibnul 'Arabî met him at Seville. He describes him as a great ascetic and a Malâmite (in Ibnul 'Arabî's sense). He also confesses that he owes to Kûmî a great deal of his ascetic training, and says that he was the first to teach him the very meaning of the word Sûfism and to introduce him to Qushayrî's *Risâlah*.
- (2) Şâlih al 'Adawî who was another ascetic Ibnul 'Arabî met at Seville. He regards him as one of his spiritual masters and describes him as a most perfect Şûfî.
- (3) Abû 'Imrân al Mirtulî, a contemporary of Al Balawî. Ibnul 'Arabî says that in his ascetic discipline Mirtulî followed the method of Al Hârith al Muḥāsibî of Bagdad. He practised many austerities, etc., etc.

From what Ibnul 'Arabî says about these Şûfis whom he calls his Shaykhs we learn more about their personal life and miracles, etc., than about their doctrine, for apparently they had none.

(a) *Ibnul 'Arabî and Ibn Masarra*

Monsieur Palacios—in his *Abenmasarra*—tries to establish an historical connection between the Şûfî School of Al Meria and the much older School of Ibn Masarra to which he seems to believe the School of Al Meria was affiliated. From this he wishes to draw the inference that Ibnul 'Arabî's system of philosophy can be

¹ *Fut.* III, p. 520, l. 8 from foot.

³ *Fus.* p. III.

² *Fut.* III, p. 117.

⁴ *Fut.* I, p. 327.

traced as far back as Ibn Masarra (d. A.H. 319). He believes that Ibnul 'Arabî was influenced by the Meria School which was a link between Ibn Masarra and Ibnul 'Arabî. But his generalisation seems to be too wide to be warranted by the evidence available to us at present. The following facts are important to bear in mind:

(1) We know of no historical connection either between the Meria School of Şûfis and Ibn Masarra or between Ibn Masarra and Ibnul 'Arabî.

(2) There are no extant books or even fragments of books by Ibn Masarra or any of his disciples.

(3) We know of no disciple of Ibn Masarra of any eminence in Şûfism.

(4) All that we know about Ibn Masarra and his School is contained in the following texts:

- (a) Ibn Hazm's *Fisal* (II, p. 126; IV, pp. 80, 198-200), where we find some information regarding Ibn Masarra's doctrine of *Qadar* (free will). Ibn Hazm describes Ibn Masarra as a follower of the Mu'tazilites on this point, and adds that Ibn Masarra believed that God's knowledge is of two kinds: (1) knowledge of universal truths, and (2) knowledge of particular objects.
- (b) In Ibnul 'Arabî's *Futûhât* (I, pp. 191, 194; II, p. 767; and *Fus.* p. 125), where Ibnul 'Arabî refers to Ibn Masarra's allegorical representation of the divine Throne (see Sections on the Logos and Mysticism).
- (c) In *Ta'rikhu'l Hikamâ* by Qiftî (ed. Lippert, pp. 15-16) and *Ṭabaqātu'l Umam* by Şā'id b. Şā'id al Andalusî (Mashriq, 1911, p. 666), where we find Ibn Masarra described as a follower and an ardent defender of the philosophy of Empedocles.
- (d) Other unimportant references chiefly regarding Ibn Masarra's orthodoxy. He is regarded as a heretic by most Muslim authors, especially Ibn Khāqān in his *Maṭmah al Anfus* (Const. 1302), p. 58; Ibn Şā'id in his *Ta'rikhu'l Umam* and al Farādî, *Ta'rikh 'Ulamâ' al Andalus* (b. 1202) and Dabbî's *Bughyatu'l Multamis*, p. 78. All these writers describe Ibn Masarra as a heretic well versed in the dialectic of the Mu'tazilites and a Şûfî who introduced subtle symbolism into his mystical language.
- (e) As regards Ibn Masarra's disciples, they are all, with the exception of Ismā'il al Ru'aynî and the great judge Mundhir

b. Šā'id al Ballūṭī, men of whom we know and can know very little beyond their names.¹

This is practically all the material available to us at present on Ibn Masarra and his school, and from this alone we cannot possibly form any idea about their system, i.e. if they ever had any. Monsieur Palacios has tried to construct a system which he calls Ibn Masarra's and which he has based entirely on (a) the very scanty references mentioned above, and (b) the pseudo-Empedoclean philosophy of which Ibn Masarra is said to have been a passionate defender. On the latter of these sources, our only authority is Šā'id b. Sā'id al Andalusī,² from whom Qifṭī and Ibn Abī Usaybi'ah seem to have borrowed all that they knew about Empedocles and Ibn Masarra. From these writers and Shahrastānī and Shahrāzūrī we get the following account which sums up what they understood by the philosophy of Empedocles. To Empedocles these writers attribute the following:

(1) Empedocles, they say, was the first to assert the unity of the divine Attributes and their identity with the One Reality. God never ceased to be anything other than pure Essence (*ḥuwiyyah*), which is identical with pure knowledge, pure will, benevolence, power and omnipotence and so on. God created the world but not from matter, which was co-eternal with Him: He created first the "First Element", from which all complex beings were created.³ God is One Reality and a Unity which admits of no multiplicity whatever. His Essence transcends all multiplicity.⁴ This doctrine, it is true, is characteristically Greek and chiefly

¹ (i) See Faradī (b. 1329) about al Fannī a disciple of Ibn Masarra who died in A.H. 371.

(ii) See Faradī (b. 437) about al Dajjāj of Cordova a disciple of Ibn Masarra who died in A.H. 376.

(iii) See Faradī (b. 54) about Abān b. Sā'id a disciple of Ibn Masarra who died in A.H. 377.

(iv) See Faradī (b. 1452) and Maqqarī, I, p. 335, about Ballūṭī who died in A.H. 355.

(v) *Takmilā* of Ibn al Abbār (b. 281) about Ṭarīf al Qurṭubī.

(vi) *Fīṣal* of Ibn Hazm, IV, pp. 80, 198-200, about Ismā'il al Ru'aynī, the most important disciple of Ibn Masarra. Like his master, we are told, al Ru'aynī believed in *Qadar* and the eternity of the world. He also denied the resurrection of bodies, and held that the divine Throne is the governing principle of the universe (cf. Ibnul 'Arabī where he identifies the divine Throne with First Intellect). According to Ru'aynī, God has no immediate influence on the universe, a view which is also attributed to his master.

² *Tabaqātu'l Umam* (Mashriq, 1911), p. 666.

³ Shahrastānī, II, p. 260.

⁴ Qifṭī, pp. 15-16; Sā'id (Mashriq, 1911), p. 666.

Neoplatonic. The part about the divine Attributes was developed by the Mu'tazilites (e.g. 'Allāf, d. 226). But whatever it is, it is *not* Empedoclean, for Empedocles is essentially a pluralist. He admits the "sphere" of Parmenides, not as a homogeneous substance, but as a *mixture* of Four ultimately different Substances or Elements.

(2) According to these Muslim writers Empedocles lays great emphasis on the study of the human soul as the only means of understanding both the higher and lower worlds. To seek immediate knowledge of the First Substance is impossible: to try to conceive it through your knowledge of the Phenomenal World is equally impossible. The human soul alone is the link between the two worlds: "He who knoweth himself knoweth his Lord."¹

The Soul, says the pseudo-Empedocles, is a simple, beautiful and immaterial substance. Those who deny its beauty or immortality regard its external aspect in relation to the body.² The simplicity of the soul is not organic but spiritual. "It is analogous to the simplicity of light rather than that of fire, nay, the simplicity of brilliance rather than that of light."³

The human soul is but a particular manifestation of the Universal Soul. Its ultimate aim is to return to its original "source". It is capable of attaining the highest degree of spirituality, and our aim in life should be directed towards the accomplishment of this end.⁴ The most perfect manifestations of the Universal Soul are the prophets who are sent in every cycle (*dawr*) to remind the "particular" souls of the knowledge which originally belongs to the First Element (*al 'Unṣūr*),⁵ and which the particular souls have forgotten during their temporary association with their bodies.

This view of the nature of the soul is practically identical with that of the Neoplatonists, particularly as understood by the Ismā'īlian thinkers of the type of Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā as we shall see later, and there is nothing Empedoclean about it.

To this Shahrazānī adds (still attributing to Empedocles) the Aristotelian doctrine of the three souls; the vegetative, the animal and the rational soul, each serving as a "husk" (*qisrah*) to the one below it, in the sense that the Intellect (apparently the First Intellect of Plotinus) is a "husk" for the spiritual Substance (*al 'Unṣūr*), the soul a husk for the Intellect, and Nature a "husk"

¹ Shahrazūrī quoted by Palacios in his *Abenmasarra*, p. 146, l. 14.

² Shahrazūrī, *op. cit.* p. 147, ll. 13 and 26.

³ Shahrazūrī, *op. cit.* p. 147, ll. 14 and 8.

⁴ Shahrazānī, II, p. 265; cf. *Enn.* IV, 3, 1.

⁵ Shahrazānī, II, p. 263.

for the soul and so on, down to the end of the emanations (of Plotinus). The higher (i.e. the kernel) is the soul of the lower, (the husk), and the lower reflects and manifests the "forms" of the higher.¹

This is Neoplatonism throughout, and is stated almost word by word in the *Epistles* of the Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā.

Perhaps the only genuine ideas these writers attribute to Empedocles are the following two:

(1) His idea of Love and Strife.²

(2) His theory of the Four Roots and the "Sphere"; the latter is also to be found in Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā, usually mingled with the Neoplatonic emanations; the former is hinted at here and there, but it does not play an important part in their philosophy or that of Ibnul 'Arabī. The conception of two absolutely opposite principles (or elements as Empedocles sometimes calls them) which are necessary for all "becoming" has no place in Ibnul 'Arabī's system.

This, in outline, is what the Muslim writers up to the seventh century A.H. understood by the philosophy of Empedocles, and it seems obvious that they have made another of these blunders we so often come across in the history of Hellenistic philosophy as understood by Oriental scholars of that period, owing to their mischievous habit of mixing together different philosophies and ascribing to one philosopher the whole or part of the philosophy of another.

Now the question arises as to whether Ibn Masarra was really "the follower and defender" of such philosophy, and if so, whether Ibnul 'Arabī (even assuming that we do find in him traces of some ideas of the type attributed to Empedocles by those Oriental writers) really borrowed these ideas from Ibn Masarra rather than from any other source? We have no possible means of answering the former question; as for the latter, it seems very probable, as we shall see later, that Ibnul 'Arabī learnt that part of Neoplatonic philosophy from Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā, and not from Ibn Masarra. The two following remarks are important to bear in mind:

(1) That the pseudo-Empedoclean philosophy which Ṣā'id and his group believe that Ibn Masarra knew and defended is, as we have already seen, a collection of distorted Neoplatonic ideas, and it is *their* own account of the philosophy of Empedocles, not that

¹ Shahrastānī, II, p. 262.

² Shahrastānī, II, p. 261.

of Ibn Masarra. It seems certain that they could not have studied Empedocles in the original. Owing, therefore, to the great similarity between what they call the philosophy of Empedocles and what we find in the *Epistles* of Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā, particularly on the question of the soul, I wish to make the suggestion that *they themselves* must have borrowed their knowledge on this subject from Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā and wrongly attributed that part of Neoplatonism to Empedocles.

(2) That this part (the pseudo-Empedoclean philosophy) is connected with many other parts of Neoplatonism which we find in both Ibnul 'Arabī and Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā and is actually mentioned in the *Epistles* of Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā almost literally as we shall see later.

What all this is intended to prove is (a) that we are still perfectly ignorant of Ibn Masarra's mystical philosophy, i.e. if he ever had any; (b) that the evidence adduced by Monsieur Palacios in support of his theory that Ibnul 'Arabī was influenced by the mystical philosophy of Ibn Masarra or any of his School is so insufficient that we may be permitted to disregard it altogether; (c) that the only thing Ibnul 'Arabī seems to have borrowed from Ibn Masarra is the divine Throne symbolism on which Ibnul 'Arabī puts his own interpretation; and lastly (d) that the historical connection which Monsieur Palacios assumes to have existed between the Ṣūfī School of Al Meria and that of Ibn Masarra is merely hypothetical. Therefore, even if we agree that Ibnul 'Arabī was to a certain extent influenced by the theosophical teaching of the al Meria school, it does not follow that such influence could be traced as far back as Ibn Masarra and his School.

(b) *The Sources which influenced Ibnul 'Arabī's Thought*

In the course of discussing Ibnul 'Arabī's system, point by point, an attempt was made to indicate, so far as possible, the sources from which Ibnul 'Arabī has derived some parts of his philosophy and to refer to some Ṣūfīs, theologians or philosophers whose doctrines have any affinity to his. Here, these sources will be examined more in detail. They may be divided into two main groups:

(1) Islamic sources under which we may include:

- (a) The Qur'ān and Prophetic Traditions.
- (b) Earlier Pantheistic Ṣūfīs like Ḥallāj and Bāyazīd, etc.
- (c) Muslim ascetics.

- (d) Scholastic theologians: Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites.
- (e) Carmathians and Ismā'īlians (particularly Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā).
- (f) The Neoplatonic Aristotelians of Persia; particularly Ibn Sīnā.
- (g) The Ishrāqīs.

(2) Non-Islamic sources: Hellenistic philosophy, especially Neoplatonism and the philosophy of Philo and the Stoics on the Logos which has already been discussed.¹

It is beyond the scope of this Appendix to examine *all* these sources fully, so we shall confine ourselves to the most important of them. On the philosophic side Ibnul 'Arabī is chiefly Neoplatonic, and it seems clear to me that it was Neoplatonism *as understood* by Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā that he knew. On the mystical side, he shares with Ḥallāj his style, not his passion. Ibnul 'Arabī's is a far more intellectual attitude. On the logical side as well as in matters concerning Ethics and Eschatology Ibnul 'Arabī makes a great deal of use of the Muslim theologians.

(c) *The "Epistles" of Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā,² the Works of al Fārābī and the Muslim Neoplatonists*

It is from the Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā that Ibnul 'Arabī as well as many other Oriental and Spanish Ṣūfis seem to have borrowed a wealth of material for their theosophical doctrines. Neoplatonism, in particular, which was already mixed with other Greek and Christian philosophies, must have reached Ibnul 'Arabī through this channel. In the E.I.S. we find, in an encyclopaedic form, Muslim Rationalism, Ṣūfism, Manicheanism, Zoroastrianism and many other Persian and Greek ideas and heresies massed together. On a minor scale we find the same in Ibnul 'Arabī's books, but what he borrowed from the E.I.S. he seems to have interpreted in his own way, reading into it his own pantheistic ideas.

Ibnul 'Arabī gathered together from East to West every thought that could help him to mould his pantheistic conception of Reality, and no other source than the E.I.S. could have been more fruitful to an eclectic thinker like him. What he borrowed from them he tried to work into his system just as he tried to do the same with the whole of Islam and its massive literature. Neither was Ibnul 'Arabī the only Muslim theosophist whom the teaching and the method of the Ismā'īlians, particularly of the

¹ See Sect. on the Logos.

² Will be referred to as E.I.S.

theoretical type of the Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā influenced. The phenomenon was observed elsewhere, and the same cause was found to produce a similar effect. In the mystical philosophy of Suhrawardī of Aleppo, e.g., and that of Ibn Sab'īn we find striking points of resemblance to many parts of Ibnul 'Arabī's philosophy and the philosophy of the Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā.

It is true that Ibnul 'Arabī seems to have been acquainted with more Greek philosophy than what is contained in the E.I.S., e.g. the philosophy of Philo Judaeus and the Stoics, especially on the Logos doctrine. How he came to be familiar with such philosophy is not easy to say.¹ He seems also to have learnt a great deal from the Muslim Neoplatonists and al Fārābī, especially the latter who insisted on using the Pen, the Table, the Throne of the Qur'ān for Plotinus' First Intellect, Universal Soul and Universal Body and so on.

*(d) Points of Correspondence between Ibnul 'Arabī
and Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā*

We have no means of knowing whether Ibnul 'Arabī ever belonged to any Ismā'īlian sect. It is most probable that he did not. He often condemns the Ismā'īlians and attacks them on many points; but, like Ghazālī, though he despises them, he often forgets that he is all the time borrowing their ideas and terminology. His method of expounding his philosophy, i.e. his way of starting from Islamic dogmas and gradually modifying them and reading into them whatever philosophical ideas he wishes to introduce, and ultimately explaining them away, is practically the same as that of the Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā. Ibnul 'Arabī's motive for doing so may have been fundamentally different from Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā's but the actual result is the same. Their allegorical interpretation of Muslim Eschatology and the whole of the Qur'ān and prophetic Traditions, which Ibnul 'Arabī seems to have adopted very faithfully, was their principal method of accomplishing their one aim, i.e. the overthrowing of Islam and its principles.

The following are points of resemblance between Ibnul 'Arabī and Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā arranged in order of their occurrence in different parts of Ibnul 'Arabī's system.

¹ Many of these ideas must have been in the air, so to speak, in which Ibnul 'Arabī and many other Sūfis and philosophers were breathing. They must also have been handed down by word of mouth from the Greek origin through Christian monks and philosophers.

On Ontology

(a) The emanations of Plotinus and the grades of "being", although the Ikhwānus-Safā were more thoroughgoing Neoplatonists than Ibnul 'Arabī (see Sect. on Pantheism).

(b) Their doctrine of Absolute Being and Ibnul 'Arabī's theory of the "Essence".

(c) Their conception of God or the Ultimate as they call Him, i.e. their doctrine that the Ultimate has no attributes, and that His nature admits of no contradiction, a point on which Ibnul 'Arabī insists. Of course Ibnul 'Arabī regards this as expressing only one aspect of Reality.¹ For them, God was, like Plotinus' One, more the *Cause* of all than the *Essence* of all.² God, they say, is not even the spiritual world. He is the cause of all spiritual and material worlds. He creates things, not in the sense that a builder builds a house, but in the sense that things *proceed* or emanate from Him in the way numbers proceed or emanate from number one. The world is not God nor a part of Him but *an emanation* from Him "created by His Grace and Will".³ This is Neoplatonism slightly modified. Ibnul 'Arabī adapts it and gives it a definite place in his pantheistic doctrine regarding the so-called emanations as merely *subjective* (see Sect. on Pantheism). The universe, for them, is an evolution from the spiritual Substance they call *Hayūlā*.⁴ They also admit, like Ibnul 'Arabī, the reality of Time *within* the Phenomenal World. God is prior to the universe but it is only a logical priority, while the priority of the "spheres" to the "elements", e.g., is a temporal priority.⁵

On what seemed to them to be a metaphysical axiom "that from one being only one can proceed", which Ibnul 'Arabī quotes in his *Futūḥāt*,⁶ they based their theory of emanation (or creation). Here they give us a description of the emanations which is purely Neoplatonic and which Ibnul 'Arabī reproduces almost literally.⁷ They call the First Intellect *al makhḥūqūl ibdā'ī* (the uniquely created being), the "instrument of creation", the first emanation and the image of God, etc., etc., all of which terms Ibnul 'Arabī uses for what he calls the Reality of Realities or the Logos.⁸

¹ For their definition of the Ultimate see *Epistles*, iv, p. 81; cf. *Epist.* i, p. 37.

² See *Epist.* iii, p. 41.

³ *Epist.* iii, p. 109.

⁴ *Epist.* iii, p. 119.

⁵ *Epist.* iii, p. 120.

⁶ *Fut.* i, p. 52.

⁷ See *Epist.* iv, pp. 230-1, and iii, p. 122.

⁸ *Epist.* iii, p. 122, and i, p. 37; cf. Sect. on the Logos. For their description of the rest of the emanations see *Epist.* iii, pp. 4, 7, 18, also iv, pp. 234-5, and iii, p. 6.

Their idea of the Universal Soul and its relation to the particular soul which is a "mode" of the All-Soul¹ (the second emanation) is another point of resemblance.

Their emanations form a causal chain, each of which is caused by and reflects the perfections of the one above it;² the higher comprehend the lower: and the lower the emanation, the less perfect and the farther it is from God.³

The Ismā'īlians and Ibnul 'Arabī, who follows them on this point, include the "sphere" and the "Four Roots" of Empedocles in their list of the emanations of Plotinus. But by the "sphere" (*al falak al muhit*; Empedocles' *σφαῖρος* or the "Whole") they do not mean what Empedocles means. For them, it is just the starry heaven the centre of which is the Sun, with Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, above and Venus, Mercury and the Moon below.⁴ Below the Moon they put the Four Roots or Elements of Empedocles.

On Psychology and Epistemology

Greater still seems Ibnul 'Arabī's indebtedness to Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā in his psychological and epistemological ideas. The following points will show the chief resemblance between his ideas and theirs:

(1) Their definition of the human soul as a simple living substance whose nature is activity and cognisance.⁵

(2) The soul is all that is meant by "I" or "thou"; the sole proof of its existence is knowledge, intuitive and reflective.⁶

(3) That the human soul is a particular "mode" of the Universal Soul.⁷

(4) Their view that the highest form of spiritual life and the ultimate aim of the human soul is its return (apparently in a real sense) to the Universal Soul and its complete emancipation from all material relations.⁸ Like Ibnul 'Arabī, they hold that the life of the particular soul (after death) in the Universal Soul is all that is meant by the next world.⁹ The happiness or unhappiness of the soul in the next world (thus conceived) is all that they understand by Heaven and Hell. The only difference between them and Ibnul 'Arabī is that they insist more on the renunciation of the material

¹ *Epist.* III, pp. 9, 43-4; cf. Suhrawardī.

² *Epist.* III, pp. 41-2.

³ *Epist.* III, p. 332.

⁴ *Epist.* I, p. 78, III, p. 23. For the effects of the spheres see *Epist.* IV, pp. 243-7.

⁵ *Epist.* III, p. 78; cf. III, p. 17.

⁶ *Epist.* IV, p. 226.

⁷ *Epist.* III, pp. 43-4.

⁸ *Epist.* III, p. 120.

⁹ *Epist.* III, pp. 72-3, 81; IV, p. 189.

world and all associations that belong to it in order to secure the happiness of the soul, while Ibnul 'Arabî insists more on gnosis.¹

(5) They call the soul the *khalîfa* (Vicegerent) of God on this earth (see Sect. on the Logos).

(6) Their view of the immortality of the soul and all the Spiritual World.²

(7) The highest form of spiritual life is that of a prophet or an heir (*wârîth*): compare Sect. on the Logos.³

(8) Their empirical psychology which is practically reproduced by Ibnul 'Arabî.⁴

(9) Their theory of esoteric knowledge as a secret doctrine and their view of the infallible Leader (*Imâm*). See Ibnul 'Arabî's view on the *Quth*. Sect. on Logos.

On the Microcosm and the Macrocosm

(1) Their doctrine of what they call the "absolute man" (*al-insânî'l muṭlaq*) or the Vicegerent (*al khalîfa*), which seems to be the prototypal idea of Ibnul 'Arabî's Perfect Man.

(2) The points of correspondence they draw between the microcosm and the macrocosm⁵ (cf. Sect. on Logos).

(e) Hallāj's Influence on Ibnul 'Arabî

Of all the Ṣūfis who may be said to have inspired Ibnul 'Arabî's doctrine, Hallāj seems to have exerted the greatest influence. Ibnul 'Arabî seems to have been thoroughly acquainted with Hallāj's mystical sayings, and he is even supposed to have written a commentary on Hallāj's terms entitled "*As-Sirāj al Wahhāj fi Sharh Kalāmīl Hallāj*".⁶ He also refers to him in many places in his *Futūḥāt*, quoting him on several points and either supporting them and reading into them his own pantheistic notions or refuting them.⁷

Some remarks have already been made, in the course of discussing Ibnul 'Arabî's system in general, about Hallāj and his main doctrines, and in what way they agree or disagree with Ibnul 'Arabî's and how some of the most vital points in Ibnul 'Arabî's system seem to be inspired by Hallājian ideas. Here,

¹ *Epist.* iv, pp. 190, 221-2.

² *Epist.* iv, pp. 107-17, 120.

³ *Epist.* iv, pp. 153, 178, 180.

⁴ *Epist.* iii, pp. 37, 45.

⁵ *Epist.* iii, p. 26 foll.

⁶ See Massignon's *Pasṣion d'al Hallāj*.

⁷ See *Fut.* i, p. 219, ii, pp. 15, 165, 445, 478, 720; iii, pp. 22, 51, 52, 155, and iv, pp. 105, 309.

these points will be repeated in a summary form together with a few more.

(1) On the question of the One and the Many which is a modified form of Hallāj's doctrine of *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt* or *Ṭūl wa 'Ard'*¹ (see Sect. on One and Many).

(2) On the doctrine of the Logos and the question of the pre-existence of Mohammed, Hallāj's *Huwa Huwa* and Ibnul 'Arabī's Perfect Man (see Sect. on Logos).

(3) On the nature of esoteric knowledge as a direct revelation from the "Light of Mohammed" (see Sect. on Logos).

(4) On the difference between the Unity which belongs to God *per se* and Unity as asserted of Him (see Sect. on Transcendence and Immanence).

(5) On the Phenomenal World as a Veil of the Real (see Sect. on Essence and Attributes).²

(6) On the theory of divine Love (see Sect. on Aesthetics).

(7) On the difference between *mashī'ah* and *irādah* and the relation between the divine law and the divine decree (see Sect. on Ethics).

(8) On the unknowability of God.³

(9) On the esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ān. Compare, e.g. Hallāj's interpretation of the following verses, which seems practically identical with Ibnul 'Arabī's:

(a) Qur. II. 51: "Repent unto your Creator and kill your souls." Hallāj says "kill your self" means pass away from it and all that is other than God "so that the non-existent should return to its non-existence and the Real alone should endure".⁴ Ibnul 'Arabī's interpretation is the same, only given a more pantheistic flavour.

¹ See *Fut.* I, p. 219.

² See *Tawāsīn*, p. 73. In *Q.T.R.A. Hallāj*, by Massignon, p. 80, Hallāj says:

"Between me and Thee my *anniyah* is troubling me.
Lift up with Thy Grace my *anniyah* from the middle",

which seems precisely what Ibnul 'Arabī means by saying (in the *Fuṣṣ.*) that the Phenomenal World is the very "Veil of itself" (*Wa huwa 'ayn al-hijāb 'alā nafsihi*). Shahrastānī uses the term *annun* as equivalent to *dhāt* (see Shah. II, p. 336) and Ibnul 'Arabī in his *Fut.* IV, pp. 49-50, says that the *anniyah* of anything is its *haqiqah* (reality or essence). But Ibnul 'Arabī is not so consistent in the way he uses this term. Sometimes he uses it as equivalent to "I-ness" as opposite to *Huwiyyah* ("He-ness"), and sometimes he uses it to mean essence either of God or any particular essence. See *Fut.* IV, p. 50 (the verses).

³ *Tawāsīn*, pp. 70-2.

⁴ Hallājīan Texts, by Massignon in his *Lexique de la Mystique*, p. 24.

- (b) Qur. II, 256: "God, there is no God but He, the Living and the Self-subsistent." Ḥallāj's com. on this verse¹ is remarkably similar to Ibnul 'Arabī's interpretation of the Name *Qayyūm* (self-subsistent).
- (c) Qur. XXIII, 72: "Verily we offered the 'trust' to the heavens and the earth, etc." According to Ḥallāj the "trust" is the divine aspect of Man.² Ibnul 'Arabī interprets the same verse, understanding by the "trust" the divine attributes which the "Perfect Man" manifests and on account of which Man is called *ḵalīfa* (Vicegerent).
- (d) Qur. XLVIII, 10: "Verily those who swear allegiance to thee swear allegiance to God." In his com. on this verse, Ḥallāj says that this is the "state of Unity" (*maqāmu'l jam'*), which is exactly what Ibnul 'Arabī means when he says that "the Reality of Mohammed belongs to *maqāmu'l jam'*".³

It is true that Ḥallāj belongs to a different class of mystics from that to which Ibnul 'Arabī belongs, but in many of Ḥallāj's sayings Ibnul 'Arabī finds fertile soil to sow the seeds of his pantheistic doctrine. He modifies most of Ḥallāj's ideas in such a way as to fit in with his own system. I do not wish to assert that Ibnul 'Arabī was a follower of Ḥallāj or that his system was Ḥallāj's system, for Ḥallāj had no such an elaborate system, but rather that Ḥallāj was one of the most influential sources of which Ibnul 'Arabī availed himself.

Besides Ḥallāj, Ibnul 'Arabī borrowed ideas from numerous other Ṣūfīs and gave them all his usual pantheistic colouring. He refers to Bāyazīd in more than a hundred places in his *Futūḥāt* and often quotes Junayd, Shiblī, Tustarī, 'Abdul Qādir al Jīlānī and his pupil Abus-Su'ūd b. al Shiblī, Muḥammad b. 'Abdī'l Jabbār an-Niffarī, Ghazālī and scores of others. But his references, on the whole, are too short and incidental to throw any light on the doctrines of these Ṣūfīs. Only now and then do we find places where Ibnul 'Arabī explains a doctrine held by one or other of these Ṣūfīs or a term coined by them such as the term *mawqif* (mystic station) of Niffarī⁴ and *al Haqqu'l Makblūqu bihi* of Ibn Barraḡān⁵ and *al 'adl* of Tustarī and *Lāhūt* and *Nāsūt* of Ḥallāj and so on.

¹ See Ḥallāj's com. in *Hallājian Texts*, op. cit. p. 25.

² *Ibid.* pp. 55-6.

³ *Ibid.* p. 61. Cf. *I'ur.* p. 304.

⁴ *Fut.* I, pp. 505, 771; II, pp. 187, 805, 827.

⁵ See Sect. on the Logos.

(f) *The Influence of the Scholastic Theologians
on Ibnul 'Arabī*

On the formal side of his doctrine Ibnul 'Arabī seems to be greatly influenced by the dialectic of the Muslim theologians with which he seems to have been very well acquainted.¹ His theory of the One and the Many seems in one of its aspects to be an application of the Ash'arite doctrine of substance and accidents (see Sect. on the One and the Many). His view on the divine Attributes is identical with that of the Mu'tazilites. He disagrees with the Ash'arites who hold that the Attributes occupy a middle position, i.e. that they are neither God nor other than God. On the question of *Qadar* (free will) he is more in sympathy with the Ash'arites who believe that Man is capable of acting but does not actually do it: God is the Creator of man and all his actions. Of course he interprets their theory in a pantheistic way (see Sect. on Ethics).

Ibnul 'Arabī's whole system is full of dialectic arguments in which he uses the method and the terms of the Mutakallims, but he does not keep such arguments unmixed with his mysticism or his other wildly fantastic views.

(g) *The Qur'ānic and the Traditional Element in
Ibnul 'Arabī's System*

To the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions Ibnul 'Arabī always looks for support on whatever he says, whether they have any bearing on it or not. His general procedure is rightly described by Prof. R. A. Nicholson as follows: "Often Ibnul 'Arabī takes a text of the Qur'ān and elicits his doctrine from it in a fashion well known to students of Philo and Origen."² He does the same with Prophetic Traditions, but as many of the Traditions Ibnul 'Arabī brings to bear on his system seem to be highly doubtful, we shall limit ourselves here to the Qur'ān and how Ibnul 'Arabī handles it to serve his own purpose. The Qur'ānic passages which he quotes may be divided into two main groups: (a) those which are susceptible to pantheistic interpretation, and (b) those which are not.

¹ See *Fut.* I, pp. 49, 50-8, 100, 155-6, 207, 246, 260, 266, 341, 371, 390, 445, 675, 747, 748; II, pp. 5, 10, 13, 243, 306, 323, 527, 570, 629, 676, 689, 703, 818, 845, 849, 853, 881, 886; III, pp. 22, 61, 108, 280, 364, 527, 611, 632, 642, 701; IV, pp. 269-70, etc., etc.

² *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 149.

In theory Ibnul 'Arabí condemns *ta'wil* (interpretation) but in practice he indulges in a far worse method of understanding the Qur'án than *ta'wil*. He interprets the Qur'án in such a way as to fit in with his pantheistic doctrine even at the cost of violating its language and grammar. Sometimes the Qur'án is turned into Neoplatonism, sometimes into some other kind of philosophy, and it scarcely is the Qur'án itself as we generally understand it.

Ibnul 'Arabí finds in the Qur'án whatever he wants, but he could have derived the same conclusions from any other text if he had adopted the same method of interpretation. It is obvious that the ambiguity of the Qur'án in many places and the fact that it is a mixture of all sorts of ideas make it very easy for Ibnul 'Arabí to use it in the way he does. He understands some passages literally where their literal meaning fits in well with his pantheism, and there is no doubt that the Qur'án abounds with such passages.¹ The God of the Qur'án is described, on the one hand, as an absolutely transcendent and incomparable Deity, and on the other, as one who hears, sees, has hands and feet, and face. He is the light of the heavens and the earth, and He so fills every place that "if you lower a rope into a well it drops on Him" (Traditions). He is with us wherever we are; He is nearer to us than our jugular vein. In the physical and moral worlds, He is described as the doer of all actions—the sole agent and cause and so on and so on. In these, as well as many other descriptions of God in the Qur'án, Ibnul 'Arabí revels because when he takes them on their face value, so to speak, he does not fail to find them pregnant with pantheistic ideas which he elaborates and weaves into his system. If, on the other hand, the literal meaning is of no avail to him, he interprets the text with the help of some ingenious philosophical devices in such a way as to elicit whatever doctrine he himself wishes to explain—thus giving us a new Qur'án altogether.

As for the Qur'anic justification of Mysticism itself as a discipline, Ibnul 'Arabí does not find it difficult to invoke the authority of the Qur'án wherever he finds the least indication of such justification, and there seems to be no doubt that the Qur'án does advocate an ascetic practice of austerities² and self-morti-

¹ E.g., Qur. viii, 17; xlviii, 10; lxxxv, 20; ii, 110; lviii, 8, xv, 29, etc., etc. The Prophetic Traditions which are often quoted by Ibnul 'Arabí in support of his pantheistic doctrine are: "I was a hidden treasure", "He who knoweth himself knoweth his Lord", and so on.

² See Qur. xxxiii, 16; lxxiii, 2; xxix, 44. About esoteric knowledge as resulting from piety, see Qur. ii, 282; viii, 29, etc.

fication. But the Qur'ān does not preach a pantheistic doctrine of mysticism, neither does it approve of mysticism itself as an institution.

The other group of Qur'ānic passages Ibnul 'Arabí quotes is where there is not the slightest suspicion of pantheism. To this group Ibnul 'Arabí applies his most unnatural yet ingenious method of interpretation. A great many passages of this kind have already been referred to in connection with his eschatological doctrine and his theory of Essence, Attributes and Names. Here, we shall cite a few more.

(1) Qur. xli, 53: "We will show them our signs in the quarters of the world and in *themselves* until it is plain to them that it is the truth." Ibnul 'Arabí understands by the "truth" here the Real, i.e. God as the Essence of all.¹

(2) Qur. xxiv, 35: "God is the light of the heavens and the earth, etc." where Ibnul 'Arabí understands by light Essence.

(3) Qur. xxviii, 88: "Everything is perishable except His face." The face of God, he says, is His Essence which is the essence of all.

(4) Qur. ii, 29: "He taught Adam all the names." Adam for Ibnul 'Arabí is equivalent to the "Perfect Man" who manifests all the names of God.

(5) Qur. i, 6: "Guide us to the right Path." The right Path for him is his universal religion.

(6) His lexicographical interpretation is shown in the way he understands such term as *jannatī* (my Paradise: Qur. lxxxix, 30) as equivalent to *sitrī* (my *nāsūt*); *riḥ* (wind: Qur. xxx, 50) as coming from *rāḥab* (comfort); *muttaqūn* (pious: Qur. ii, 172) coming from *waqā* (to protect), and *muttaqūn*, he says, are those who regard God as their protection² because the "Essence" protects the "form" and so on.

From such a mixture, irreconcilable as it may seem, Ibnul 'Arabí gathered his material, but with a fundamental conception of the ultimate nature of Reality, so deeply rooted in the man's mind, he found his way for reconciling its conflicting elements. That he should have appealed to the Qur'ān and Moslem Orthodoxy in general is not difficult to explain. But realising the glaring inconsistency between Orthodox Islam and his Pantheistic philosophy, he felt it his duty to explain away the former in order to save the latter. He was a man of colossal memory and extensive erudition, and he availed himself of every source that was

¹ *Fut.* iv, p. 117.

² *Fus.* p. 196.

accessible to him. He shows no preference for one source rather than another: but selects from them all that appeared to him to be relevant to his general system. We need not, therefore, try to trace his philosophy back to one particular thinker, or limit it to one particular source. We must only distinguish between his main thesis and the abundant details he usually weaves round it. The former is undoubtedly his own; the latter is borrowed and put there purposely, I believe, to obscure the issue, or to use as a mask behind which he hopes to hide his Pantheistic ideas.

Never in the history of Islamic thought was there before him such a consistent system of Pantheistic Philosophy of which we can reasonably say that he was the follower or the defender. His attempts in this direction mark a new phase in Philosophic mysticism. And not only was he the founder of that new religion in the Moslem world, but he was also the master and the ultimate authority of every Moslem that discoursed on the subject after him.

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INDEX I

NAMES AND TITLES

- 'Abdullāh al Habashī, xvi
 'Abdul Qādir al Jīlānī, 94, 136, 190
 Abenmasarra, by A. Palacios, 22, 76.
 See also Ibn Masarra
 Abraham, 166
 Abū Bakr b. Khalaf, xv
 Abū Madyan, 76, 136, 178
 Abū Sa'īd b. Abū Khayr, 98, 170
 Abus-Su'ūd b. ash-Shibl, 136, 190
 Abū Tālib al Makkī, 103, 160
 Adam, 72, 78, 99, 100, 110, 193
 al 'Adawī, Sālīh, 178
 Alexandria, 73, 178
 'Alī b. Yūsuf, xvi
 al 'Allāf (Abū Hudhayl), 181
 'Amr b. 'Ubayd, 153
 Andalusia, 175
 Andrae, Tor, xiii
 Angelus Silesius, 90
 Aristotle, 175. *See also* Peripatetics
 Ash'arites, xix, 5, 13, 28, 29, 33, 35,
 59, 111, 112, 143, 154, 184, 191
 Bagdād, xvi
 al Ballūtī, 180
 Bāyazīd al Bistāmī, 58, 78, 136, 138, 190
 Bergson, 104
 Brockelmann, xvii
 Browne, Prof. E. G., xii, xiii, xix, 90
 Cairo, xvii
 Carmathians, 89, 168, 182
 Christ, 20, 72, 87, 88, 91, 136
 Cordova, xv, 175
 ad-Dabbī, 179
 Damascus, xvi
 Dante, xii
 David, 173
 Dhun-Nūn, 138
 Dihya al Kalbī, 118, 130
 Eckhart, 91
 Egypt, xvi
 Empedocles, 61, 64, 180-2
 Enneads, of Plotinus, 11, 36, 45, 51,
 61, 119, 122, 124, 142. *See also*
 Plotinus
 Epistles of Ikhwānus-Safā, 29, 61,
 121, 166, 184, 186, 187, 188.
 See also Ikhawānus-Safā
 Fairbairn, A. M., 58
 al Fārābī, 185
 Farādī, 179, 180
 Fayrūzabādī, xiv
 Gabriel, 118, 130
 Gibb, E. J. W., 134
 al Ghazālī, 73, 86, 97, 109, 120, 131,
 175, 185, 190
 al Ghazzāl (Abū 'Abdillah), 176
 Hallāj, 13-15, 16, 22, 44, 57, 68, 71,
 72, 78, 86, 87, 91, 105, 117, 120,
 123, 138, 140, 141, 160, 162,
 170, 172, 184, 188, 189, 190.
 See also Ṭawāṣīn and Massignon
 Hegel, 40, 54, 60
 Hikmatu'l Ishraq, 3, 108. *See also*
 Suhrawardī
 Iblīs, 161
 Ibnu'l Abbār, 175
 Ibnu'l 'Arfī, 175, 177, 178
 Ibn Bajja, 175
 Ibn Barraḡān, xvi, 75, 175, 177, 190
 Ibnu'l Fāriḍ, xx, 14, 129, 147
 Ibn Hazm, 97, 179, 180
 Ibn Khāqān, 179
 Ibn Mardānīsh (Muh. b. Sa'īd), xv
 Ibn Masarra, xiii, 76, 97, 174-8, 179,
 180, 182-3
 Ibn Qasī, xvi, 175
 Ibn Rush, xv, 121, 127, 175, 176
 Ibn Sab'īn, 175, 185
 Ibn Sīnā, 173
 Ibn Taymiyya, xiv, 167

- Ibn Tufayl, 175
 Idrīs, 21, 110
 Ikhwānūs-Safā, 121, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187. *See also*
 Epistles of *and* Sincere Brethren
 'Imādu-Dīn (son of Ibnul 'Arabī),
 xvi
 Inge (Dean W. R.), 69, 88, 91
 'Irāqī, xii
 Ishrāqīs, 3, 5, 6, 47, 108, 182, 184
 Ismā'īlīs, 61, 75, 89, 164, 181, 182,
 184, 185, 187
 al Jāhūz, 167
 Jāmī, 'Abdul Rahmān, xii, xvii, 109
 Jesus, 100, 110. *See also* Christ
 Jīlī, 'Abdul Karīm, 67, 80, 86, 110
 Joseph, 110
 al Junayd, 152, 190
 Jurjānī, 4
 al Ka'ba, 82, 121
 al Kāfīf, Abū'l Rabī', 176
 Khal'ul Na'layn, of Ibn Qasī, 176, 177
 al Khayyāl, Ahmad b., 89
 Kleinere Schriften des Ibnul 'Arabī,
 3, 8, 9, 10, 32, 67, 68, 69, 70,
 71, 82, 83
 al Kūmī, Yūsuf b. Khalaf, 133
 al Kutubī, b. Shākīr, xvii
 Leibnitz, 154
 Lully, xii
 Macarius, 88
 al Mahdī, 101
 al Makhzūmī, xiv
 Massignon, Prof. L., xiii, 90, 145
 al Māyurqī, Abū Bakr, 175
 al Meria, 175; Sūfī School of, 175,
 176
 Methodius, 88
 al Mirtulī, Abū 'Imrān, 178
 Moses, 110
 al Muhāsibī, al Hārith, 178
 Muhyid-Dīn b. az Zakī, xvi
 al Murīdīn, Sūfī Sect of, xvi
 Mu'tazilites, the, 35, 143, 150, 176,
 181, 182, 191
 Neo-Platonists, the, by Whittaker,
 45, 49, 51, 116, 125, 140
 Neo-Platonists, the, 87, 181. *See also*
 Plotinus
 Nicholson, Prof. R. A., xiii, 81, 87,
 88, 98, 110, 147, 191
 Nifāī, Muh b 'Abdel Jabbār, 190
 Noah, 21
 Nyberg, H S., xiii *See also* Kleinere
 Schriften
 Origen, xix, 82, 191
 Palacios, M. A., xiii, 117, 122, 127,
 133, 174, 178, 180, 183
 Peripatetics, 120
 Pharaoh, 161
 Philo, 77, 87, 91, 92, 184, 185,
 191
 Plato, 35, 36, 48, 51, 112, 126, 156,
 175
 Plotinus, 11, 36, 45, 50, 60, 61, 62,
 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 90, 107, 109,
 115, 116, 119, 122, 140, 142,
 143, 160, 161, 181, 182, 185
 Ptolemy, 61
 Qāshānī ('Abdul Razzāq), xii, xviii
 Qāshānī' Com. on the Fusūs, 19, 70,
 73
 Qāsiyūn, Mount, xvi
 al-Qiftī, 179, 180
 al-Qūnawī (Sadrud-Dīn), 133
 al-Qur'ān, 20, 29, 43, 44, 52, 55, 57,
 67, 72, 83, 84, 86, 107, 147, 148,
 149, 151, 152, 156, 166, 191,
 192
 al-Qushayrī, 137, 138, 139, 140
 Risālah fī Kayfiyyat al Sulūk ilā
 Rabbil-'Izzah, by Ibnul 'Arabī, 74
 Risālah fī Ma'nā al Nafs wa'l Rūh,
 by Ibnul 'Arabī, 117, 122, 123,
 127
 al Risālah al Qushayriyyah, *see*
 Qushayrī
 al Ru'aynī, Ismā'īl b. 'Abdillāh, 97,
 179
 Rūmī, Jalālud-Dīn, xii
 Sa'dud-Dīn, son of Ibnul 'Arabī,
 xvi
 Šā'id b. Šā'id al Andalusī, 180
 St John, Epistle of, 87

St Paul, 91
 al Sarrāj, Abū Nasr, 137 foll., 139
 Scholastics, the, 36
 Seville, xv, 175, 178
 Shabistarī, xii
 Shahrastānī, 89, 90, 180, 181, 182
 Shahrāzūfī, 181
 al-Sha'rānī, xvi, xvii
 al-Shiblī, 190
 Sincere Brethren, the, 126
 Spinoza, 33, 58, 105, 120, 123, 157,
 172
 Stoics, the, 66, 67, 77, 87, 90, 184,
 185

Suhrawardī, of Aleppo, 84, 108, 157,
 185
 al Suyūfī, Jalālud-Dīn, xiv
 Taftāzānī, xiv, 4
 Tawāsīn, of Hallāj, xix, 14, 22, 79,
 86, 105, 120, 161, 172, 189
 Tunis, xv
 Tustarī, 103, 109
 Wāsīl b. 'Atā, 153
 Whinfield, E. H., 141
 Zoroastrians, 157

INDEX II

SUBJECTS

- Absolute*, Being, meaning of, 1-4, source of all beings, 5-6, the transcendent God, 22, reason for its existence, 56 foll., as a metaphysical category, 68; knowledge of, 119; in its descent to our knowledge, 145
- Acosmism*, account of, 54 foll.
- Allah*, name, the greatest line of force, 33, comprises all names, 71, 74; God revealed in the state of the Godhead, 41, of Ilam and the pantheistic One, 55-7, worshipped by all, 150 foll.
- Amor intellectualis Dei*, 105
- Angels*, 82
- Animal Man*, 69, 79
- Antinomianism*, of Ibnul 'Arabi, 162
- Appearance*, the phenomenal world, 10 foll., 18. *See also* the Many and Khaq
- Apprehension*, 124-8
- Attributes*, Infinite Attributes of Spinoza, 33, meaning of, 34 foll.; Ash'arites' doctrine of, 35; explained away, 37 foll.; ethical, of God, 41 foll.; hypostatized, 45; perfection relative to, 77; are the phenomenal world, 80; Perfect Man, the embodiment of, 81, 83; wilāyah, a divine, 94; of Extension and Thought, 120; differentiating, 123, divine, predicated of Man, 135, of Difference, 138, of contingent beings, 144; of God, 145
- Avenger*, the, 165
- Beatific Vision*, 167. *See also* Shuhūd
- Beauty*, 83; absolute, 129; basis of love, 173
- Being*, meaning of, 1-5; not separate from essence, 5-7; and existence, 7-8; species of, 8 foll., necessary, contingent and impossible, 9, pure, 157, 158
- Beliefr*, ways of forming, 149 foll., predestination of, 152 foll.
- Body*, 120 foll., relation to Spirit, 123 foll.
- Body*, universal, 120, 185
- Causality*, 24-32
- Causality*, of the divine Names, 33-4
- Cause*, the Qutb as a, 75; the Perfect Man as a, 84
- Cause*, the One, 111
- Cause*, God as, 145
- Cause-factors*, 26
- Contingency*, 9
- Contingent beings*, 68
- Creation*, of the world, 29 foll., mystery of, 82, of the mystic, 33 foll.
- Creative evolution*, 145
- Creative*, Word, 171
- Creator*, the, 145
- Darkness*, pure, 157
- Death*, meaning of, 123
- Decree, the divine*, 160-3
- Designer*, the, 145
- Desire*, meaning of, 128 foll.
- Determination*, of the Will, 153-6
- Determinism*, scientific, 155
- Dreams*, meaning of, 129 foll., viridical, 131-2
- Effect*, belongs to the same continuant as the cause, 25, the same as the cause, 26-7
- Effect-factors*, 26
- Elements*, of Empedocles, 114
- Emanation*, Neo-Platonic, 60, 61, 186, 187
- Emanations*, and manifestations, 62-5
- Epiphany*, first, 70, 91

Epi-phenomenalism, 123

Essence, regarded from different points of view, 10, as the One, everywhere and nowhere, 11, divine, underlying everything, 17, relation to form, 18, transcendence of, 22-3, 88; eternity of, 29, the divine, the One Universal Substance, 34-6, all attributes may be predicated of the, 38; unknowability of, 39; identical with al Dahr, 44, active through divine Names, 46, relation to the a'yān al thābita, 47-51; identical with "Face", 55, eternal overflowing of, 62, identical with Consciousness, 69, relation to Rational Principle of the universe, 71, Vision of, 114, contemplation of, 145, known to God as it is, 152

Essence, of the Perfect Man, 82

Evil, problem of, 156 foll.; pure, 157, relativity of, 157 foll.; relation to divine law, 159. *See also* Sin

Father, the, 87, 88

Form, 18, 26. *See also* Essence

Four Roots, of Empedocles, 182, 187

Fusion, 88

Future life, meaning of, 167

Giver, the, 145

Gnosis, essence of Saintship, 93; cause of happiness in Paradise, 168, 188. *See also* Esoteric knowledge

Gnostic, the, possesses the himmah, 136, recognises God in all beliefs and forms, 150. *See also* 'arīf

Gnostic involution, 145

God, the Absolute, *see* Absolute

God, identical with the One, *see* the One

God, the personal, explained away, *see* Attributes and Names

God, of Islām, 55 foll., 192. *See also* Allāh

God, in Ibnul 'Arabī's Pantheistic philosophy, 55 foll.

Godhead, and Lordship, 15; and Essence, 23; an aspect of Reality,

38, the "Presence" of, 41, 63; inward aspect of, 68, 74; the second Person in the, 88, the Logos as the, 92

Good, Problem of, 156 foll., Absolute, 157, relativity of, 157 foll.; relative to our knowledge, 158, relative to divine law, 159

Good, the, 158

Heart, the, centre of esoteric knowledge, 106, 107, 115 foll., same as particular intelligence of philosophers, 116; eye of God, 119; changeability of, 119 foll.; centre of divine activities, 134; action of, in perception, 126; in dreams, 132

Heaven, way of describing, 164; how explained away, 165; gnosis and faith the sole distinction of the people of, 168

Hell, description of, 164; explained away, 165; how denied, 166; torture of the veils in, 168; only temporary, 167, happiness in 167-8; view of Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā on, 187

I, reality signified by, 123

Idea of Ideas, 68 foll. *See also* Reality of Realities and Haqīqatul Haqā'iq

Ideas, eternal, 126

Ideas, intelligible, of Plato, 35, 47, 51, 112

Imagination, 129 foll.

Immanence, 18-24, meaning limitedness, 19, 20; correlative of transcendence, 21, 23; asserted by "wahn", 109, part of the full nature of Reality, 150; pure, 151

Incarnation, 88, 90; Hallāj's theory of, 140

Intellect, asserts transcendence, 22, a faculty of knowledge, 103, 104; knowledge of, 105-9, as understood by the Philosophers, 115; not identical with rational soul, 120, 125; limitations of, 169

Intellect, the Active, 127

- Intellect, the First, of Plotinus, 51, 62; Reality revealed in, 63, a name of the Logos, 66, 69; identical with the Reality of Mohammed, 71, 90; the first created being, 91, identical with Universal Soul, 118
- Islām*, the God of, 55 foll.; knowledge of the laws of, 96, faith in, 110; a universal religion, 151; the overthrowing of, 160
- Judgment*, kinds of, 103-4
- Knowledge*, intuitive, 105 foll., mystical, 109 foll., Ibnul 'Arabī's mystical, 109
- Knowledge*, esoteric, springs from the individual soul, 117; Ikhwānus-Safā on, 188
- Law, the divine, 159-60
- Light*, pure, 108, 157, operative in all apprehension, 124 foll.; free in intuition, 125; identical with Essence, 193
- Logos*, 66-92, names of, 66 foll.; identical with the Reality of Realities, 68-70; identical with the Reality of Mohammed, 70-1; as the Qutb, 72-5; as the Perfect Man, 77-82; in the theories of Hallāj, Ghazālī, Jīlī, and Ibnul 'Arabī, 86 foll.; Christian theory of, 87-8. *See also* Mohammed, and Perfect Man
- Logos*, Endiathetos, 78
- Logos*, Prophorikos, 78
- Lord*, all actions belong to the, 156; everything approved of by, 161
- Love*, basis of all worship, 151; principle of, 153; fundamental in all manifestations, 170; kinds of, 171-3; cause of creation, 171
- Love*, of the gnostics, 172
- Love*, and Beauty, 173
- Love*, and Strife, 182
- Macrocosm*, the, 82, 119, 188
- Many*, the, contrasted with the One, 10-13; the phenomenal world, 12; how conceived of by a mystic, 109. *See also* Appearance
- Matter*, 17, 88 *See also* Body
- Merciful*, the, 33, 165
- Mercy*, absolute, 150; shown in all things, 159, 168
- Microcosm*, the, 78, potential and actual, 81, resembles the Macrocosm, 82; reflects all the divine perfections, 119, theory of, by Ikhwānus-Safā, 188
- Mohammed*, the Prophet, head of the Sūfī hierarchy, 70 foll., the only one to be called 'Abdullah, 71, spirit of, and other prophets, 72, identical with the Logos, 73 foll., unique and unparalleled being, 74; identical with the Qutb, 75-7, eternity of, 86; the Reality of, three-fold, 87; source of esoteric knowledge, 67, 90; a malamite, 94. *See also* Haqīqatu'l Haqā'iq, Qutb
- Reality of, 67, 70-3, is God himself, 88; instrument of creation, 177
- Light of, 74, 92, 189
- Monotheism*, contrasted with Polytheism, 148
- Mysticism*, 137-47, object of, according to older Sūfis, 137 foll., fanā' in, 138 foll.; experience in, 140; according to Ibnul 'Arabī, 141-3. *See also* Fanā'
- Names*, divine, definition of, 34 foll.; identical with ḥaḍras, 41 foll.; two-fold implication of, 42; method of interpretation of, 42-5; two aspects of, 46-7, Prophets under the influence of, 74
- Nature*, universal, 62
- Necessity*, meaning of, 9-10
- Next world*, meaning of, 187
- Not-being*, 7-8, pure, 157
- Noūs*, 66, 85, 142
- Omniscient, God, 152
- One, the, 10-8; identical with God, Essence and Reality, 10 foll.; relation to the Many, 12 foll.; 15-18

- One*, the, and the Mind, 70; as a cause, 186
- One*, the Primal, 11
- Paradise*, delights of, 166. *See also* Heaven
- Partner*, denial of God's, 148
- Path*, the, essential unity of, 148; the right, 193
- Patience*, definition of, 162
- Pen*, the, 86, 185
- Perception*, meaning of, 125 foll.
- Perfection*, of God, 83, equals being, 159, includes moral imperfections, 162, God's infinite, 163
- Perfect Man*, the, the most perfect manifestation of God, 64, 77; the vicegiant, 78, the microcosm, 79-82; the cause of the Universe, 82-5, identical with a malamite and a saint, 93; rational in the highest degree, 102; focus of divine Consciousness, 119, creative activity of, 135-6
- Personal idealism*, 118
- Personality*, the passing away from, 144
- Planes*, of being, 7; with regard to God, 8; the fine, 134-5
- Polytheism*, 148; defended, 149; not ordained, 152
- Predestination*, of beliefs, 152; mystery of, 154; as the divine Decree, 160
- Propositions*, kinds of, 103
- Qur'ān*, the, description of God in, 20; of the words of God, 97, not a final revelation, 98, how revealed to Mohammed, 118; passages on Hell in, omitted, 171; allegorical interpretation of, 189-90; element of, in Ibnul 'Aṭabī's system, 191-3
- Rationalistic Monism*, 102
- Rationality*, distinguishing factor in Man, 126
- Reality*, as a substance, 3; One in existence, 10-11, underlies all multiplicity, 12; both divine and phenomenal, 26, 31; in relation to our knowledge, 36-41; God as the all-embracing, 54, object of love, 58 foll., symbolised, 76; outward aspect of, 84, knowable by intuition only, 107, consciousness of, in fanā', 141, in its absolute nakedness, 146
- Reality of Realities*, *see* Haqiqatu-l-Haqā'iq
- Reason*, universal, 66, 116, 120
- Relative being*, 8
- Religion*, universal, 148-52
- Resurrection*, meaning of, 166
- Saint*, Mohammedan, meaning of, 93 foll., includes all Prophets and Apostles, 94-6; rights of, 96-8
- Saints*, seal of, 98-101, what distinguishes, 99; eternity of, 99, description of, 100-1
- Scientia*, intuitiva, 105
- Self*, killing of, 189, consciousness of, 138, 139, 140; annihilation of, 141, 142, the phenomenal, 144
- Sin*, meaning of, 161, not disobedience to the divine will, 162
- Soul*, Universal, 61, 62, 64, 116, 117, 119, 120, 132, 166, 185, 187
- Soul*, particular, how differs from Universal, 118; nature of, 120 foll.; relation between kinds of, 120 foll., immortality of, 188
- Soul*, rational, not identical with intellect or body, 122; relation of, to body, 123-4; a knowing substance, 126, how comprehends the One, 142; never left the One, 143; a state of Universal Soul, 170
- Soul*, view of, attributed to Empedocles, 181; theory of, by Ikhwānuṣ-Ṣafā, 181
- Sphere*, the Starry, 164
- Sphere*, the Starless, 164
- Sphere*, of Empedocles, 182, 187
- Spirit*, definition of, 120; not material, 122
- Spirit*, of the Seal, 67, 73, 74

Subjective relations, 116

Substantial continuant, 3

Table, the Guarded, 132, 185

Throne, see al 'Arsh

Time, continuity of, 111; reality of, 186

Traditions, Prophetic, 98, element of, in Ibnul 'Arabî's system, 191

Transcendence, 18-24; pantheistically explained, 19-20, fundamental aspect of Reality, 20-1; of the unity of God, 23, mystic state of, 76; asserted by the intellect, 109, pure, 151

Transcendent, God as, 192

Transmigration, 90

Trinity, God as, 31; fundamental principle, 87

Trust, the, 190

Ultimate, God as, 186

Union, 117, end of mystic experience, 137

Universe of discourse, 6

Veils, the, 146, 189; torture of, 168

Vision, of Reality, 150

Will, the, meaning of, 128 foll., determination of, 153 foll., divine, 160 foll.

INDEX III

TECHNICAL TERMS, ETC.

- 'abd, 155, 166
 abdāl, 94
 'abdu'l Jāmi', 66
 al-'adam al mahd, 9
 'adhāb, 165
 'adhābu'l hijāb, 168
 'adhābu'l Jahl, 168
 adjectival determinable, 3
 al 'Adl, 42, 190
 al Afīād, 94
 al Ahad, 39
 ahadiyyah, 24, 39, 63
 ahadiyyat al majmū', 39
 ahadiyyat al Wāhid, 39
 ahkām, 12, 16, 30, 33
 'ālamu'l ajsād, 14
 'ālamu'l amr, 14, 122, 123
 'ālamu'l arwāh, 14
 'ālamu'l ghayb, 14
 'ālamu'l khalq, 14
 'ālamu'l ma'ānī, 14
 'ālamu'l tabī'ah, 14
 al 'Alim, 43
 al 'amā', 2, 39, 63, 114, 129, 171
 amr, 161-2
 al amr al taklīfī, 162
 al amr al takwīnī, 162
 anniyyah, 15, 189
 annun = dhāt, 189
 'arḍ, 14, 105, 189
 'ārif, 10, 144, 149. *See also* Gnostic
 al 'ārifūn, 133
 'Arsh, 63, 66, 82
 'awālīm al wujūd, 7 foll.
 a'yān, 13, 21, 78, 158, 171
 al a'yān al thābita, 9, 44, 46, 47-53,
 63, 70, 112
 'ayn al basīrah, 115, 131
 'ayn al yaqīn, 147

 haqā', 137, 146
 barzakh, 74, 82, 91, 165

 al Dahr, 44

 dhāt, 13
 dhikr, 139
 didd, 39

 fanā', 52, 57, 85, 108, 135, 137 foll.,
 141-7
 fardiyyah, 74
 farq, 12, 18
 fayd, 61
 al fayd al aqdas, 50

 al Ghaffār, 42, 159
 ghayb, 24

 habā', 68, 91
 al Hādī, 159
 hadrah, 25, 33, 41, 118
 ḥadratu'l arwāh, 134
 ḥadratu'l asmā', 53
 ḥadratu'l hiss, 134
 ḥadratu'l mithāl, 134
 ḥadratu'l Nūr al mahd, 143
 ḥadratu'l wujūb bil dhāt, 42
 ḥadratu'l wujūb bil ghayr, 42
 ḥadratu'l Zūlmah al mahdāh, 143
 al Hāfiz, 43
 haqā'iq, 69
 haqā'iq ma'qūlah, 3
 haqīqah, 33
 haqīqatu'l haqā'iq, 2, 63, 67, 68, 71,
 74, 91
 al Haqq, 10-15, 18, 21, 23, 25, 37
 al Haqq al Makhluq bihi, 75, 177, 190
 al Haqq al Mutlaq, 4
 haqq al yaqīn, 147
 hashr, 165, 166
 haūlā, 67, 150, 186
 hawā, 151. *See also* Love
 himmah, 133-6
 hudūth, 18
 hukm, 49, 53
 hulūl, 20, 138-9, 172
 huwa huwa, 79, 189
 huwiyyah, 12, 15, 24, 48, 114, 150, 189

- ijtihād, 97, 98
 al ilāhiyyah, 15
 ilhām, 132
 'illah, 19, 27
 'ilm, 103
 'ilm al ahwāl, 105
 'ilm al asrār, 105
 'ilm al 'aql, 105
 'ilm al ghayb, 106
 'ilm ladunnī, 105
 'ilm al yaqīn, 147
 imām, 75, 90, 91, 188
 al insānu'l kāmīl, *see* Perfect Man
 al insānu'l kabīr, 78
 al insānu mutlaq, 188
 irādah, 43, 160
 irth Muhammadī, 99, 100
 itlaq, 19, 23
 ittihād, 90, 139

 al Jabbār, 42
 jabr, 154
 al Jabriyyah, 154
 Jahannam, 165. *See also* Hell
 jam', 12, 18
 Jannah, 165, 193. *See also* Paradise
 jihat al farq, 18
 jihat al jam', 18

 kalām, 72
 al kalām al dhātī, 44
 kalimāt, 72, 73, 75
 kalimatu 'l-Lāh, 88
 kashf, 52, 76, 97, 107
 kathīb, 164, 168, 169
 kawwān jāmi', 78
 khalfah, 78, 92, 96
 al khalq, 10-15, 29
 al khalq al jadīd, 29, 112, 141
 khātamu'l awliyā', 98 foll.
 khayāl, 129, 130
 khilāfah, 85, 97, 110
 al-khilāfatu'l 'āmmah, 95
 al-khilāfatu'l Muḥammadiyyah, 100
 khilāfatu'l tashrīf, 96
 khuld, 166
 kufr, 20
 kun, 73

 lāhūt, 13, 14, 26, 78, 91, 120, 189, 190
 al-Latīf, 43

 al-lawh al mahfūz, 63

 al m'iddatu'l 'ūlā, 67
 māhiyyāt, 3, 5 foll., 48
 mahshar, 164
 mizān, 164, 165
 majālī, 149
 majlā, 34, 151
 al-makhlūq al ibdā'ī, 186
 malām, 93
 malāmite, 178
 malāmiyyah, 93 foll.
 manāzil, 76
 maqām al jam', 63, 190
 maqāmāt, 79, 165
 ma'qūl thānin, 1, 4
 marātīb al wujūd, 7
 ma'rīfah, 93, 103. *See also* Gnosis
 maikaz al dā'irah, 2
 al-martabah al rahmāniyyah, 63
 mashī'ah, 160
 ma'wā, 166
 al mawjūd al kullī, 1
 al mawjūd al mutlaq, 1
 mawqif, 190
 mazj, 172
 al-Mu'adhdhib, 159, 170
 al-Mudill, 159
 al-mufāṭiqāt, 123
 al-Mujīb, 44
 mukallaf, 155
 al-Mu'min, 42
 mumkin, 10
 munazzih, 19
 al Muqīt, 43
 mushabbih, 19
 al-mutā', 86
 al-Mutakabbir, 42
 mutlaq, 2
 mutaṣarrif, 136

 nafs, *see* Soul
 al nafs al mutma'innah, 115
 na'im, 165, 166
 nāsūt, 13, 14, 26, 78, 91, 120, 189, 190
 nātiq, 89
 al-nisbah al mutlaqah, 128
 al-nisbah al shakhsīyyah, 127, 128
 nizā', 161
 nubuwwah, 95. *See also* Prophecy
 al-nubuwwatu'l 'āmmah, 97, 100

nubuwwatu'l ikhtisās, 97
 al nubuwwah al mutlaqah, 97
 nuqtah, 2
 nūr Muhammad, 92. *See also* Light
 of Mohammed

qadā', 163 *See also* Decree
 qadar, 191. *See also* Free Will
 al qalam al a'lā, 67
 al Qayyūm, 190
 qutb, 67, 71, 72 foll, 75-7, 78, 88,
 89, 91, 188

al Rabb, 39, 155
 ruhūbiyyah, 15, 18, 63, 95, 166
 al-Rahīm, 159
 al-Raqīb, 43
 risālah, 95 *See also* Apostleship
 rūh, 75, 92 *See also* Spirit
 rūh al quds, 85

salām, 166
 al-Samī', 43
 shafā'ah, 165
 shaff', 91
 shart, 27
 shirk, 56, 143
 shuhūd, 107, 114
 sidq, 133
 sirat, 164, 165
 sirr al qadar, 108
 šūrah, 13

ta'alluq, 46
 al-ta'ayyunu'l awwal, 91
 tahaqquq, 46
 tajallī, 109, 141, 168
 tajalliyāt, 61, 62, 63
 tajdīdu'l anfās, 112
 tajdīd al a'rāḍ, 112
 tajsīm, 19

takhalluq, 46
 taklīf, 155
 takwīn, 31
 tanzīh, 19-24, 37
 tanzīh al tawhīd, 23, 75, 76, 115
 taqyīd, 18, 19, 23
 tariq al ahadiyyah, 148
 al tariq al amam, 148
 tasarruf, 133, 136
 tashbīh, 19-24, 37
 tawhīd, 22, 56, 59, 138, 139
 ta'wīl, 192
 thubūt, 107, 154
 tūl, 14, 105, 189

'ubbād al waqt, 150
 'ubūdīyyah, 18, 95
 umanā', 94

al Wadūd, 170
 wahdat al wujūd, 1, 55. *See also*

Pantheism
 wāhidiyyah, 39, 63
 wahm, 109
 wahy, 132
 wājib al wujūd li dhātihī, 5
 wājib al wujūd bil ghayr, 9, 10
 waliyy, 94, 95
 warathah, 94
 wārith, 99, 100, 188
 wasā'il, 56
 wasṭlah, 166
 wilāyah, 93 foll.
 al wilāyatu'l 'āmmah, 100
 wujūb, 18
 wujūd kullī, 1
 wujūd mutlaq, 1, 4

yawm al hasrah, 165

zuhūr, 154

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